

READINGTON TOWNSHIP

N.J.'s giant hot air balloon festival canceled because of the coronavirus

The 38th annual New Jersey hot air balloon festival has been canceled for 2020 because of ongoing coronavirus restrictions, event organizers said Monday.

Originally pushed back from July to October, the New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning in Association with PNC Bank will now take place the weekend of July 24, 2021, at the Solberg Airport in Readington Township.

This is the first year the festival will not take place.

"We hoped that when we decided in the spring to move this year's festival from July to mid-October, the festival would provide a welcome relief and help us heal from this crisis," said Festival Executive Producer Howard Freeman. "But at this point, there are too many variables out of our control and we must remain steadfast in upholding our commitment to safety first."

In addition to health concerns, organizers cited current crowd size restrictions as a key reason for canceling the 2020 dates. Outdoor crowds must currently be limited to no more than 500 people. The annual three-day event draws crowds of over 165,000 attendees.

Tickets will be valid for the 2021 festival. Refund and exchange options will be emailed to ticket holders today, organizers said. *Katie Kausch*

