Loss of USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1), 3 September 1925

Source: [www.history.navy.mil](http://www.history.navy.mil)

On 2 September 1925 USS *Shenandoah* left her base at Lakehurst, New Jersey, to begin a flight to the Midwest. This voyage was one of a series of publicity trips by the Navy's airships that were intended to enhance public support for Naval Aviation, but which also kept the dirigibles away from the Fleet and reduced opportunities to serve with the operating forces. *Shenandoah*'s journey was planned to take her to an air show at St. Louis, Missouri, then north to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and return by way of Dearborn, Michigan.

During the early morning darkness of 3 September, *Shenandoah* was flying over southeastern Ohio when she abruptly encountered violent atmospheric conditions. Powerful air currents buffeted her so severely that her crew was unable to maintain control. Rising rapidly above her pressure height, then falling and rising again, her hull structure was overstressed amidships, breaking the airship in two. *Shenandoah*’s external control car and two engine cars fell free, carrying the dirigible's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Zachary Lansdowne, and several other men to their deaths. The stern section came down nearby, while Lieutenant Commander Charles E. Rosendahl and several men were able to fly the bow section to ground as a free balloon. In all, twenty-nine of those on board survived.

*Shenandoah*’s crash was the nation's most dramatic aviation disaster yet. Fourteen trained crewmen had been killed and a valuable Navy asset had been lost. Criticism, both public and professional, was intense. Though the remaining dirigible, USS *Los Angeles* (ZR-3), operated safely for several more years, and new airships were designed to be much stronger than *Shenandoah*, her mid-air breakup had forcefully demonstrated the threat that weather presented to lighter-than-air craft. Less than a decade later, storms would cause the loss of the new, much larger and more capable airships *Akron* (ZRS-4) and *Macon* (ZRS-5), bringing an end to the Navy's brief experiment with rigid airships.
Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Lt. Cmdr. Charles E. Rosendahl, USN

Lt. Cdr. Rosendahl USN at USS *Akron* christening. 1931

Lt. Cmdr. Zachary Landsdowne, USN

Lt Cmdr Landsdowne, USN in the ZR-1 control car, laying out a course. 1924
Images of the USS Shenandoah (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Wreckage of Shenandoah's after section, surrounded by sightseers, soon after the airship crashed in southern Ohio.

Photo # NH 98997  USS Shenandoah's wrecked after section, September 1925

Wreckage of the airship's after section, shows the port horizontal and upper vertical tail fins in the right center.

Photo # NH 42038  Wreckage of USS Shenandoah's rear section, September 1925
Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Wreckage of the airship's after section, shows the port side horizontal tail fin, with the airship's name just below and in front of it

Wreckage of the airship's after section, shows the after section's port side, forward of the tail fins
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Photo # NH 42031  Wreckage of USS Shenandoah, September 1925

Wreckage of the airship's after section, shows aft along the port side of the after section, with the port horizontal tail fin in the distance

Photo # NH 42039  Wreckage of USS Shenandoah's rear section, September 1925

Wreckage of the airship's after section, looks directly aft from in front of the after section, with Shenandoah's top national star marking in right center
Wreckage of the airship's after section, taken from off the after section's starboard front end, with the tail at the left and the top national star marking at right.

Wreckage of the airship's after section, Shenandoah's top national star marking in left center and one of her five engine cars in the right foreground.
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Wreckage of the airship's after section, with Shenandoah's top national star marking at right.

Wreckage of the airship's after section, view shows the entire after section, from off the starboard side, with the remains of the tail fins at the left.
Wreckage of Shenandoah's bow section on a southern Ohio farm soon after it crashed.

Wreckage of Shenandoah's bow section, shows the forward section off its starboard side.
Wreckage of Shenandoah's bow section, view shows the forward section's port side, from off its rear end.

Wreckage of Shenandoah's bow section, view shows the forward section from off its port side.
Though the inscription on the photograph states that this view shows Shenandoah's control car, the structure in the center more closely resembles one of her engine cars.

Local residents examining some of the airship's wreckage, soon after she crashed in southeastern Ohio.
Men working on the airship's wreckage, possibly during salvage efforts some time after the crash.