



ALLEN SILVER

COLUMNS / ASK ALLEN

Q: ARE YOU READY to fly?

A: IT'S NOW APRIL, and by the time you read this I'll have returned from the Sun 'n Fun Fly-In at Lakeland, Florida. Most of my customers have come out of hibernation and are getting their aircraft back in the air. If you stopped by a parachute rigger's shop in the past couple of months, you have seen us performing our magic. Packing and repairing parachutes and getting them ready for another season of flying is just a small part of flying safely.

Mental attitude is just as important as anything else when you push the throttle forward and the wheels leave the ground. Have you taken the time to consider your mental state? There are many things that can cause stress. You are eager to get back into the air, but are you well rested or are you fatigued? Are there other issues to contend with such as bad weather or heat? What about home or job-related issues that are consuming a large part of your concentration? If so, you need to stand down and address the issues at hand. Military aviators recognize and understand the importance of doing this before the problem gets out of hand and causes a serious safety issue.

Think before you fly. Are you prepared to bail out?

Stress can cause poor decisions, delayed decisions, and other bad judgment calls. When flying, you need to be as close to 100 percent prepared as you can so you'll make correct and timely decisions. Pay attention to the visual signs that can cause a flight to end in disaster. In the unlikely event you ever have to bail out, make sure it is not because of indecisiveness or poor judgment. If necessary, ease back a little on your "mind throttle" until you have dusted off the mental cobwebs. This could save you from toasting your rigger with a bottle of their choice or, worse, from having your friends toast you. Remember the old saying, "Takeoffs are voluntary, but landings are mandatory." Will the landing be in your aircraft or under your parachute? The choice is yours. Once you leave the ground you *will* be landing, so prepare wisely.

Q: WHAT'S THE BEST way to protect my parachute when shipping it?

A: ONE OF MY customers recently came up with a great idea. When I received his parachute for a routine inspection and repack, it was properly boxed, as are many of the parachutes I receive. But the owner took an additional step that I've never seen before. In addition to the parachute being in its nylon-carrying bag, the entire carrying bag was placed inside an inexpensive plastic garment bag. It was the type with a zipper down the front that often accompanies the purchase of a new suit. This was a clever idea that added yet another layer of protection from external damage. Shipping boxes often get wet during the winter months.

Q: WHEN DOES THE 180-day repack of my parachute actually expire?

A: MANY RIGGERS PUT the next due date on a brightly colored piece of paper taped to the rip cord handle. This makes it easy for the wearer to determine when the chute needs repacking and recertification. However, this can sometimes lead to confusion. Let's say the due date on the label is December 25. If the FAA decides to give you a Christmas present in the form of a ramp check on December 25, is your parachute legal? Is the repack due that day, or can the parachute be worn through that day? I could leave you hanging and offer a prize for the first correct answer, but I'll cut through the suspense. The repack is good through that day up until midnight.

Q: HOW FAST DO I decelerate once I bail out?

A: THE SHORT ANSWER is very fast! If you would like a more detailed explanation, visit www.SilverParachutes.com or e-mail allen@silverparachutes.com and I'll send you a graph that shows deceleration versus exit airspeed. This graph appeared in the October issue of *Sport Aerobatics*, but was printed a little on the small size, especially for those of us who have the 40s syndrome and need glasses to read with. While you're e-mailing me for the easy-to-read graph, ask a question or two about your parachute! **IAC**

Remember, I'm also available for bailout safety seminars.
Call or e-mail for details. Have a fun and safe flying season.