



Allen Silver

By Allen Silver, IAC 431160

## Ask Allen

A master rigger answers your questions about parachutes.

**Q:** Is it important to practice my egress procedures?

**A:** In today's economy, where everyone is interested in saving time and money, wouldn't it be nice if you knew how you could save approximately 50 percent or more of the time it takes you to get out of your disabled aircraft? I will tell you how, and it will take only a few seconds before and after each flight. However, it will have considerable impact on your life. Spend this valuable learning time before and after each flight when time, altitude, and your life are not rapidly running out. The idea here is for everything to become second nature.

As a vital piece of safety gear, your parachute can save your life. Unfortunately, many pilots don't think much about actually using it. As I stated before, with a little practice, you can improve and reduce the time it takes for you to egress your aircraft by approximately 50 percent or more. All you have to do is practice your emergency egress procedures before and after each flight. It's such a simple concept, yet few pilots actually do this. After all, accidents only happen to someone else, right?

Over the past few years I've run clinics at conventions, meetings, and fixed base operators that teach pilots and instructors how to egress their aircraft in case of an emergency. Soon after I began doing this, it became apparent that teaching pilots to practice these procedures before and after each flight drastically

reduced the time needed to egress an aircraft.

The reason is simple—If you have no game plan, the thought process during an emergency is a four-step, panic-filled process that goes something like this:

**Step 1: Recognize the Problem.** This is often referred to as the "Oh shoot! I Have a Problem" step. When a major problem occurs, your brain may take a few seconds to realize that your left wing has just departed the airplane. Once your brain recognizes that this is not going to be a good day, you'll then move on to Step 2.

**Step 2:** I call this the "What

*All you have to do is practice your emergency egress procedures before and after each flight.*

**Do I Do?"** step. This is where you decide you need to bail out. Now, you need to decide what to do and prioritize the steps in a logical order. Do you jettison the canopy/door or unfasten your seat belt first? Refer to my article "Practice, Practice, Practice" on my website for the answer. Okay, now that you've figured that out and have a game plan, let's proceed to Step 3 because we are quickly running out of both time and altitude.

**Step 3:** This is the "How Do I Do It?" step. At this point you have to understand how to put your game plan into action. You now need to find

the canopy or door release lever(s). Do you know whether to push it or pull it? All this will be more complicated if you have a passenger along and he or she doesn't understand how to release the seat belts, let alone what to do next.

**Step 4: Actually Doing Whatever You Figured Out in Steps 2 and 3.** Let's hope you have enough altitude and time left. Any hesitation here starts to add up. The time it takes you to go from one step to another will seem like an eternity if you happen to be plunging toward the ground in your crippled aircraft. And time, of course, is altitude. You can easily be losing a thousand feet of altitude every three to five seconds.

Practicing your emergency bailout procedures before and after each flight, I've discovered, will allow you to go directly from **Step 1 to Step 4.** What you've developed is muscle memory. You will now react quickly because you've developed a habit of practicing egress procedures over and over. Practicing is a process, not a one-time event. When you first learned to fly, your instructor didn't show you how to make one landing and then say, "Great, that's over with." You had to spend hours in the pattern to get good at it. Even now, you continue to practice maneuvers you've done over and over to make sure you don't lose your edge. Preparing for an emergency is no different.

As humans we are creatures of



habit, and repetition is the key to reacting quickly and decisively. Nothing but practice, practice, and more practice will achieve this goal. The results will save you precious time and altitude, which, in a real emergency, could mean the difference between making it home to view another sunrise. I've run hundreds of seminars, and if you practice your bailout procedures faithfully before and after each flight, you will never skip the "Oh shoot" step. Trust me, it comes out the same in any language.

**Q:** What should I see if I've successfully bailed out of my aircraft when I look up?

**A:** Hopefully not blue sky. There are many different parachutes on the market today, and you only need to become familiar with the



one you've been wearing for years. For more than 99 percent of you, that will be a round parachute. Do you know the color? Do you know if it has steering handles? If it does, what color are they and how do you steer with them? Again, I suggest you go to my website, [www.SilverParachutes.com](http://www.SilverParachutes.com), and review my many articles on this subject. At your next repack, pull your rip cord and have your parachute rigger go over everything that's in the container until you're satisfied you understand what you have and how to use it.

**Q:** What is happening with the 180-day repack cycle?

**A:** Hopefully this is the last time I'll have to update you on it and it'll be a done deal by the time this appears in writing. My contacts at the Federal Aviation Administration's headquarters in Washington, D.C., said, "It is now on the 10th floor." What that means is it's now up for final review and the administrator's signature. Then it'll appear one more time in the *Federal Register*, giving the actual date it will become law.

Have a great day and keep the questions coming. Remember, you can always call with your questions and concerns and I'll do my best to answer them for you.

Allen Silver is the owner of Silver Parachute Sales and is always available to answer your questions about parachutes. Send them to [Allen@silverparachutes.com](mailto:Allen@silverparachutes.com).

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