



Allen Silver

By Allen Silver, IAC 431160

Ask Allen

A master rigger answers your questions about parachutes.

Q: What do I do with excess leg and chest strap webbing?

A: In a previous column, I mentioned the need to have elastic keepers to stow excess webbing. Since then several people asked how this should actually be done. The simple answer is to do what is most comfortable for you. I suggest looking at the following pictures and choosing what fits your needs (see figures 1 and 2 on opposite page).

If the leg and/or chest straps are really long, they can be shortened by a master rigger. Do not attempt to do this on you own. It's tempting for a "home-rigger" to just cut the excess from the straps. After all, how difficult can it be? And think of the money and time saved by not going to a parachute rigger! Please leave this to the professional master rigger. Only a master parachute rigger (or the manufacturer) can make alterations to a harness. A senior rigger can do it, but only under the direct supervision of a master rigger.

On all leg straps and some chest straps, the free end of the webbing must be folded back over itself one or two times and sewn with the proper thread. This prevents it from unthreading through the metal adapter when it's needed the most, during deployment. Under the stress of an actual opening, the harness webbing can easily stretch 10 percent to 20 percent. If the end of the webbing is too close to an adjustable snap or friction adapter (see figures 3 and 4), you may be in for a surprise if it pulls itself out during an opening shock.

Even if the end of a leg strap is folded and properly sewn, do not ever leave the folded end right up against the metal adjustable leg snap or friction adapter. During an actual opening, it could rip apart and unthread itself. Some pilots like to roll the webbing right up against the adjustable adapter. When that happens the adapter may not be lying flat and the webbing can easily slip. The webbing should never be so close to the adjuster that it lifts it up. Leave at least 2-3 inches between the end of the webbing and any metal adapter it runs through just to be safe.

Q: Which FARs does the place I have my chute packed have to follow?

A: If you want the entire answer, curl up with a copy of 14 CFR Part 65. This section prescribes the requirements for issuing a parachute rigger rating and the general operating rules for the holder of this certificate. Keep in mind that this section has not been revised in more than 50 years! Much of Part 65 talks about the requirements to be certificated, eligibility, and privileges. After you've determined that your rigger has the correct rating for your type of parachute (Part 65.121), you should be concerned with Part 65.127. This section discusses facilities and equipment.

It says you must have a "smooth top table at least three feet wide by forty feet long." Is this requirement really necessary? Probably not, but that's what the rule says. However, most FAA officials recognize that modern parachutes have changed and will only be looking for a clean surface. This could be a table or a mat on the floor. If your parachute will be packed on the floor, be suspicious of any place that does not have a clearly defined area that is clean and kept free of people walking in that area. For example, packing on a carpet works just fine as long as it is kept clean of contaminants, including whatever people have tracked in on their shoes.

Part 65.127 also requires "suitable housing that is adequately heated, lighted and ventilated." It also mentions "enough packing tools." Up-to-date packing manuals are not specifically mentioned, but should be included as a tool. If your rigger doesn't have a current manual, most can easily be found online at the manufacturer's website, or call the company and it will send you a manual.

I'll see you in December, and please keep your questions coming.

Allen Silver is the owner of Silver Parachute Sales and is always available to answer your questions about parachutes. Send your questions to Allen@silverparachutes.com.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Figures 1 and 2: There are many ways to safely stow excess webbing.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Figures 3 and 4: Be sure excess webbing is not stowed too close to adapters as they could cause the adapter to loosen during deployment.



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