



ALLEN SILVER
COLUMNS / ASK ALLEN

Responsibility

As I'm about to head out the door to give another bailout/survival equipment seminar I asked myself, "What can I do to make the equipment I maintain more user friendly"? It then occurred to me that you are the first line of defense. You should ask yourself that same question: "What can I do to properly protect my equipment and make it more user friendly"?

Maybe you're having your parachute packed because you're going to a contest, an airshow, or the local club where you fly always checks it for a current repack. Unfortunately many pilots think it's just another unnecessary expense.

Let me, possibly, be the first to inform you it's not your parachute rigger's job to make sure you take proper care of your expensive cushion. Their responsibility ends when you shut their door behind you and toss it into the trunk of your car. Your responsibility has just started. For the next 180 days you need to properly care for your life insurance policy. Don't ignore your responsibilities. Unless you operate an FBO and need to keep everything up to date and current to prevent the authorities from breathing down your neck you typically have no such watchdog.

Your parachute rigger will be lucky to see your chute every 180 days. If you take up other activities during those non-flying months, that's ok. But remember to store your parachute properly. I've covered this and several other tips for storing your parachute in several of my columns. Go to my website and click on "Ask Allen" and search the archives for tips on taking care of your expensive cushion. While you're searching, maybe refresh your memory and

read a few other tips. Who knows, the life you save maybe your own. I've mentioned before that my columns go down quite well with a glass of wine or a cup of coffee.

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I recently returned from a seminar where all the equipment was stored properly, but no one really knew how to properly adjust the parachutes. I found many out of adjustment. Whether you're an FBO renting equipment or the owner of the parachute you're wearing, it's your responsibility to know how to adjust your parachute or the parachutes in your care. Storing your parachute properly is certainly important, but falling out of an improperly adjusted parachute is not something that will only happen to

the next person. The webbing that keeps you secure can and often does slip out of adjustment. About 20% of the parachutes I receive for the first time are so far out of adjustment that I feel pretty confident in saying the owner had a better than even chance of falling out of their harness or getting seriously injured during the opening shock, if they had to bailout. Almost all of the remaining 80% had some sort of minor adjustment or equipment issue. That's why you need to have your parachute serviced by someone who is very familiar with your type of parachute and all the adjustments necessary to keep you from falling out or getting seriously injured.

I often get parachutes to pack, that I've never serviced before, with missing or worn out elastic keepers that can no longer hold your excess webbing in place. Almost half of the parachutes I pack have worn out rubber bands that should have been replaced long ago. Rubber bands can become sticky, especially in hot humid climates. They definitely weaken and deteriorate over time and are often overlooked, but are a critical part of holding your lines in place. Many of the parachutes I service come to me with the pack closing loop(s) way out of tolerance or worn to the point of almost coming apart. These are the loops that hold your ripcord pins in place. They'll stretch between repacks because of the pressure the pilot chute exerts on them, and need replacing or adjustment back to manufacturers' tolerances to prevent your parachute from opening by accident as you walk across the ramp to your aircraft. I often wonder if previous riggers have spare parts, the packing manuals or the means to

readjust the closing loops.

Another point I need to bring up (again) is taking your parachute to the local skydiving place may be convenient but, unfortunately, I often find the riggers there are not that familiar with round pilot emergency parachutes. This is also true of the many riggers who do not have adequate facilities, tools and equipment to do the job properly. Many riggers see very few pilot emergency parachutes, and herein lies the problem. If they have a back or seatpack rating on their FAA certificate, they may legally pack your parachute with little or no experience on that model. I'm not saying don't take it there. I'm just saying don't be afraid to ask to see their FAA riggers license and the facilities where they'll pack your parachute. Most of you carefully check where you get your aircraft or car serviced, so why not where your parachute is serviced? Don't be afraid to ask if they're familiar with your type of parachute and how many they've packed.

There are many great riggers at skydiving drop zones, or who have shops like me and others who work out of their homes, but an inexperienced rigger may not realize your parachute may have as many as seven or more adjustments to insure you and your parachute land at the same time and, most importantly, together.

Skydiving parachutes for individual jumpers, like me, for the most part are custom made and have very few adjustments other than the leg and chest straps. If the main lift webbing on your parachute (that's the vertical webbing running from your

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waist to your shoulders) is not properly adjusted you can easily fall out of your harness. Envision the chest strap suddenly and violently coming up and hitting your throat, snapping your neck or slipping over your head

and you falling out of your harness head first. Not a pretty picture, but it has happened. Just read or reread the account of Kirill's bailout in the February issue, of this magazine, to better understand what he went through. Do you want this to happen to you?

Here's some additional food for thought. Have you ever considered sending your parachute back to the factory or to some other qualified rigger, every couple of years, to make sure your parachute is getting the proper maintenance it deserves?

If you ship your parachute to your rigger have you ever wondered where it's being packed? Have them take a picture of their work area and maybe their license and email them to you. Today, everyone I know of has a digital camera and can use a computer. Even an old geezer like me can operate a computer, with the occasional help of my son.

My email address is allen@silverparachutes.com, if you have questions. If you would like, send me photos of your parachute on you and I may be able to see if it's adjusted properly. Please review your emergency procedures on a regular basis. You can also email me and I'll gladly send you a copy of my bailout seminar handout material for you to review. It's not on my website.

Remember Learn It, Link It and Live It. Fly safe and blue skies. **IAC**