



## Keeping Your Parachute in Shape

### Being proactive

Just about the time I wonder what subject to write about, something or someone comes into my shop to remind me why you need to have your equipment serviced at regular intervals. I'm not saying you must get your parachute inspected and packed every 180 days. However, it needs to be serviced and in date prior to you flying. This is especially true if it's been sitting in your closet or lying on a bench in your hangar (Hopefully Not).

Just this past week I had a customer bring me a damp parachute. This is typically not a problem if it's just water. Moisture can attract insects that may find their way into your parachute and chew on it or lay their eggs. Also the juices from insects that get squashed on the nylon parachute material may be acidic and harmful to the material. It could easily weaken it. I thanked the customer for bringing in their damp parachute. I hung it up to dry for a day or two before I inspected and repacked it. If you have a wet parachute and decide to hang and dry it yourself, be careful. **Never** dry it in direct sunlight. The rays from the sun (UV) are very harmful to nylon. Some of you may not realize it but your entire parachute assembly which includes the harness/container and the parachute canopy are made of nylon except for the metal snaps and buckles. UV damage and normal weakening with age are just two of the reasons

why professional riggers, at the recommendation of most manufacturers, will not pack anything over twenty years of age no matter what shape it appears to be in.

No sooner had I taken care of the wet parachute than UPS delivered another that was so far out of adjustment, the owner stood a better than even chance of falling out of the harness during an actual bailout and deployment. What a surprise they would have been in for. Imagine successfully bailing out of your disabled aircraft, and just out of your reach, you see a parachute just like yours. This is another sign of a very bad day that's going to get a lot worse.

How can you prevent this from happening to you? You need to become intimately familiar with your equipment. This not only applies to your parachute, but to your aircraft. Bailing out because you forgot one small detail is something I suspect you would like to prevent. Just imagine all the heated discussions your friends and fellow pilots will have because you forgot just one small seemingly unimportant detail. I can hear them now. "That would never happen to me." Hopefully you'll be around to defend yourself. If you've received egress training and have a good grasp on what you should do and how your parachute should fit then please take the time to observe your fellow pilots. It's better to question something that appears incorrect now than wish you had later.



The number one thing you can do is be proactive and take preventive steps now. Tomorrow may be too late. The number one thing I push for is an actual hands on bailout seminar by someone like me. Unfortunately there are very few parachute riggers who are familiar with pilot emergency equipment. That's why I travel extensively giving bailout seminars. They include not only egress training, but I talk about other survival equipment such as the proper wearing and care of your Nomex flightsuit, gloves and helmet. I also discuss the minimum survival equipment I feel you should carry.

Nearly my entire 25 year Air Force career was spent dealing with survival equipment. That's why I manufacture a small survival kit that can be attached to your parachute harness. I call it a SMAK Pak. That's an acronym for "Save My A@\* Kit. At each of my presentations I always ask how many have survival kits. Quite a few hands will go up. Then I ask where they carry the survival kits and almost all will say they are stored safely in their aircraft. That's when I educate them and explain that any survival equipment stored in their aircraft is called camping gear, **not survival gear**. It can only be called survival gear if it's carried on you. The few pilots who carry survival equipment on their person are almost always former military pilots, and they know where it belongs. They've had it drummed into them, throughout their military careers, that it'll do them no

good if it's buried in a smoking crater.

Check out the photos of recent seminars I gave. What are these people doing? Are they greeting me with a secret handshake or is this an integral part of my presentations? Set up a seminar and you'll find out. It could even save your life.

How can your flying group not afford a bailout seminar? I'm already booked in Texas next March. Florida is "Spring Break for Pilots" called Sun N Fun. I'll be in the state of Washington next year and the list keeps growing. Are you waiting for an incident to occur before you become proactive? My seminars are free. All I require is my travel expenses be covered and a cold beer or two. I would love to be standing before you answering your questions and knowing that when I leave you'll be better prepared to handle an emergency.

I'll leave you with a recent email I received from a customer who came to my shop seeking advice. "THANK YOU so much for your help and advice during our short meeting. I flew the other day and the chute never felt better....nice to know that I won't be falling out of it in the event I ever need it." You don't necessarily have to drive or fly to my shop for advice. If you have a concern please know that I'm only a phone call or email away. Fly Safe. Allen (209) 532-7070 or [allen@silverparachutes.com](mailto:allen@silverparachutes.com) **IAC**



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*Owned and operated by Debbie Rihn-Harvey*