



Speak Up

You might save a life

For more than 25 years I've been attending the ICAS (International Council of Air Shows) annual convention. I've always come away with great information, and this year was no exception. Each year there are numerous educational programs. One in particular for performers is titled "Air Show Performer Safety Stand-Down." Tragically, a lot of time is spent on discussing accidents that usually occurred during the year. One particular comment that came through loud and clear was that pilots haven't invented a new way of killing themselves; they just keep repeating the same mistakes over and over. One of the guest speakers also showed a slide that said, **"Accidents do not just happen to THEM; they happen to YOU."** Several very experienced pilots got up and said they wished they had stepped in earlier when they observed an unsafe practice that later led to an accident, but hesitated because they didn't want to feel like the Grinch and embarrass themselves or the other person. It's our duty to pass on our experience and knowledge to anyone willing to listen and learn so the same mistakes are not repeated each year.

My challenge to you is to create a culture of safety, not only for yourself, but also for those in your flying community.

I can't help you if you pull out of your *last* maneuver too low. But, if you ever have to bail out, remaining disciplined enhances your chance of survival. Practicing your egress procedures faithfully will give you an edge and greater chance of survival than someone who flies oc-

asionally with little thought or preparation on what to do in case of an emergency. Listen to your inner self; when the hair on the back of your neck stands up, you need to listen to that feeling. After all, it kept the caveman alive when the saber-toothed tiger was stalking him.

To create a culture of safety for your flying community you *must* be disciplined, and that starts with you. Discipline is at the core of good judgment. Discipline in an emergency allows you to think under stress. This is a subject I teach in my bailout seminars and has everything to do with your ability to bail out safely before you permanently inherit the earth. You can help by creating an atmosphere where you and your fellow aviators can discuss safety concerns one-on-one or in a group before someone makes the 6 o'clock news.

Your ability to be disciplined starts with being able to control your ego. Another great quote from the safety stand-down was, "If you think safety is expensive, try an accident." Now is the time for you to suck up your ego and realize there are many threats to establishing safety discipline. Specific threats are:

- Normalization of bad habits.
- Judgment and proficiency (or lack of).
- Loss of situational awareness.

Strive to *be good*. This requires you to hone your skills and discipline, or you can just roll the dice and *be lucky*.

Discipline requires you to preflight not only your aircraft and flight plan but also your parachute and other safety equipment each and every

time you put them on. Practice your egress procedures before and after each flight until they become second nature. Go to my website, www.SilverParachutes.com, and download a copy of my "Bailout Seminar Handout." I usually hand this out at my seminars, but will post it to my home page. I also have numerous articles and all my "Ask Allen" columns available. They all go down well with a glass of wine or a cold beer.

Some of the air show industry's greatest stars flying today shared their personal near-death experiences with everyone there. They discussed what happened and wished someone had stepped in earlier to mentor them. But they were lucky and now freely pass on their experience, with no ego attached.

One item that keeps rearing its ugly head, and is of particular concern to me, is how many parachutes come to me for servicing so far out of adjustment that if the pilot bailed out, he or she stands a good chance of falling out of the harness. Is your parachute constantly feeling like it's falling off your shoulders? Is it constantly shifting about when you do that loop or roll? If so then you need to have someone check your parachute immediately for proper fit. While this may best be done in person with your parachute rigger or someone very familiar with your parachute, I've had people send me photos of them wearing their parachute for me to evaluate the fit. Sometimes even a phone call or e-mail will help.

Until next time remember to practice—practice—practice. Learn discipline so you don't have to endure the pain of regret. **IAAC**