

**From the Downwind Carolina Rigging Loft**

**#34**

**25 May 2005**

**Recent Magazine Articles**

The last couple issues of Parachutist and Skydiving magazines have contained articles that have attracted my attention. I would like to express a few opinions based on personal experience.

**May 2005 Skydiving – Page 3 – Fatality and AAD etc.**

What chaps my ass here is that no-one seems to be asking why this jumper, with two parachutes, failed to fulfill the most basic of priorities which is to deploy the appropriate parachute at the correct altitude while stable. For me that is main above 2000' agl and reserve below 2000' agl. All the attention is paid to why the AAD did not activate which is easily answered by the fact that she activated it at an elevation far different than the one jumped at. Read your AADs owners manual. We have two parachutes, three handles and a limited amount of time to live on each jump, it ain't rocket science.

**May 2005 Parachutist – Incident Reports – Main reserve entanglement after pilot chute in tow malfunction.**

A frustrating aspect of skydiving incident reports is that they often leave us with more questions than answers. My question in this incident is why was the pilot chute in tow? The PC in tow is one of the most easily preventable malfunctions I know of. Proper bridle routing, maintenance and replacement of pilot chute and/or kill-line and deployment of the pilot chute can go a long way to prevent this situation. The increasingly tighter packing characteristics of newer rigs can sometimes trap the main bag in the container even after the pin has been extracted. After deploying the reserve the tension on the main bag is then removed allowing it to leave the container thus possibly resulting in the main reserve entanglement. Placing the bag in the main container with the bottom grommet placed straight up, as opposed to rotating the bag with the grommet toward the bottom of the reserve container, can help reduce the possibility of such a situation.

As noted in the incident reports, both fatal and non fatal, ones response to such a malfunction must be determined individually. Both methods can be appropriate and can be questioned. Your response must be based upon your knowledge of your gear and ability to handle high speed malfunctions. My personal plan is to deploy my reserve, and be prepared to act as a canopy transfer (cutaway after reserve deployment rather than before) and be prepared to conduct 2 canopies out procedure as described by the PIA dual square report.

**May 2005 Parachutist – Incident Reports – Fatality due to spinning main.**

If the report is accurate (which is always a question in this business) the steering line appears to have come unstowed after clearing the line twists, possibly during the process of collapsing the slider or bringing it down below the risers. The point made about stopping the spin using opposite control (either toggle or rear riser) is very important to remember when found in this situation. There is a tendency on the part of some jumpers to fixate on a problem and lose altitude awareness. You should not spend the rest of your life trying to fix a problem instead of responding to the situation.

Steering lines can be prematurely released by many methods including the following:

1. locking loop stowed above the riser guide ring.
2. Hard main canopy opening forcing the slider down onto the top of the toggle pushing it out of the keeper and locking loop.
3. torn toggle keepers not keeping the toggle in place.
4. slider grommets being pulled over the toggles to stow below the risers pulling the toggle out of the stowed position.
5. Improperly stowed excess steering line. This occurs when the excess is pulled taught when the risers are fully loaded. Risers stretch and the load on the excess line if improperly stowed can cause the toggle to “fire” or come unstowed.

The above is by no means the definitive list of reasons a steering line may come unstowed prematurely, just a list of reasons I have observed over the years.

Regarding #5, recently I have been experimenting with a new toggle line set up on my Velocity 90. I experienced two toggle fires on two separate jumps due to the way I was stowing my excess line. The release occurred when the risers were stretched and one of the steering lines would release. Each time this happened it was on one side only. Each time it was on the left side and I noticed it while observing my opening sequence. The canopy would want to take off to the right so I countered with lots of left rear riser to stabilize the opening until I confirmed the cause visually. I would then immediately release the right steering line and very carefully stow my slider. During all this I was especially motivated to watch for canopy traffic, constantly reminding myself not to become so focused on one problem that I create another.

### **June 2005 Parachutist – Incident Reports**

The first non-fatal entry regarding the individual who cutaway above the pea pit in an attempt to win an accuracy competition reminds me of my favorite saying, “Stupid people suffer.”

The two fatal entries remind us of the need to be cautious when downsizing and the need to be able to fly conservative, braked approaches with high performance canopies, as well as the need to choose alternate landing areas wisely.

Again, those stated above are just my opinion, but I hope it helps.

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