



Pocket Change

Q: WHAT DOES HAVING loose objects in your pocket or in your passengers' pockets have to do with bailing out of a perfectly good aircraft?

A: AS MUCH AS I would like to claim a bottle of fine wine for saving your life after you successfully bailed out of your crippled aircraft, I would rather have you take some basic precautions. Remember, takeoffs are voluntary, but landings are mandatory. Whether you land in your aircraft or under an open parachute, you're coming back to earth and it's your choice. You preflight your aircraft and check the oil and kick the tires, but do you ask your passengers to remove all loose objects from their pockets? A loose cell phone, pen, or quarter flying around your cockpit can get lodged under a rudder pedal or possibly caught around a bell crank, jamming a rudder cable. (I've seen bent quarters wrapped around a bell crank.) It could remain lodged for a long time before it rears its ugly head. It's a simple problem to prevent, but each year I hear of such items almost causing someone to choose a parachute as the desired means of landing. They were lucky and say they learned a valuable lesson. I wonder how many unfortunate accidents are results of such items making controlled flight impossible? The

investigation usually results in pilot error as the probable cause. The investigators find nothing conclusive because the cell phone, pen, quarter, or whatever went flying after the accident. I fly a Marchetti SF-260, and before we did any aerobatics, some on purpose, we had the floorboards removed and found several plastic ties that were lying there waiting to lodge themselves somewhere and potentially cause a problem. If you want to make a parachute jump, I suggest you go to a local sky-diving center. I don't want to get a call from you or see you on the evening news trying to explain why you bailed out of your aircraft.

Q: HOW DO I properly stow excess leg or chest straps?

A: IT'S YOUR ATTENTION to the little details that makes the difference in surviving a scary situation or becoming a statistic. Many people haven't even considered that there might be a better way to stow the excess webbing on their parachute straps, but I have. It can mean the difference when getting out of your parachute harness in a hurry, especially if you just survived a bailout and are being dragged across the

ground in high winds. Getting a serious case of road rash or worse could possibly be prevented by something as simple as how you stow your excess leg and/or chest straps. Stowing the excess straps properly will make loosening them in a timely manner much easier because they're not obstructing you reaching and loosening them (see **Photo 1**). You'll notice in Photo 1 that the improper stowing of the excess leg strap prevents me from seeing, grasping, and loosening the adjustable V-ring in a hurry. I suggest you also consider carrying a hook knife like the one on my mini survival kit (SMAC Paks). Being dragged across a rough field strewn with rocks and boulders and then going through a barbed wire fence at the other end can be life-threatening, and getting out of your harness quickly is a critical part of you surviving a bailout. The time to prepare is before you have a problem. Now let's take a look at **Photo 2**. By doing something as simple as properly stowing the excess webbing on your chest and leg straps, you can make it easier to grasp the V-ring. Once you have a hold of your V-ring or other adjustable adapter, simply lift/pull it up 90 degrees (perpendicular to the webbing). By pulling up quickly and firmly with your hand and fingers, the webbing will loosen, making it easier to undo the snaps and get out of your harness.

Q: MY PARACHUTE AND the container that holds my parachute are both over 20 years old. Can I put a new parachute in the old container?

A: THE QUICK ANSWER is yes, because there is no set law saying you can't.

However, every manufacturer of pilot emergency parachutes in the United States wants its equipment out of service in 20 years. Now pay attention, because this means not only the parachute, but the harness/container that holds the chute as well. The 20-year service life is a very good number. It gives a fudge factor of about five years. Twenty-five years and later are usually the times I find parachutes affected by excessive UV damage or just plain wear and tear that could render them non-airworthy. Having to make an emergency bailout is stressful enough, especially if you have to keep your fingers crossed hoping your relic doesn't come apart at the seams.

Q: HOW DO I box and ship my parachute—especially during winter?

A: I'VE COVERED THIS before, but this is the time of year I get water-soaked boxes delivered to my shop. I feel a quick reminder is in order. Most arrive properly protected, but I've already had two parachutes arrive that were damp because they were not in their protective carry bags or in a plastic garbage bag. I suggest you always ship in both. Please don't place your parachute loose in the box. Your parachute could take several days to air and dry if it gets wet. What if it wasn't water? Then you may have a costly problem on your hands. Remember the slogan "Pay me now or pay me later?" It's your choice. **IAC**

I'll be at Sun 'n Fun. Stop and say hello. I should be giving one or two bailout seminars, and I'll also be in the Para-Phernalia booth pre-tending to work. Allen@SilverParachutes.com



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