



Allen Silver

By Allen Silver, IAC 431160

Ask Allen

A master rigger answers your questions about parachutes.

Q: Can I copy your articles for my personal use and our club newsletter?

A: Yes! I encourage you to do so. All I ask is that you use the articles in their entirety without any editing. This can change the meaning and possibly be dangerous. Many flying clubs or fixed base operators have made my three-part bailout series mandatory reading for their students and have them sign off that they've read it. It's just a little extra "insurance." Another option is to link directly to the articles on my website www.Silver-Parachutes.com. This allows quick and easy access to all the articles and other beneficial information.

Q: Can I attach my SPOT or other personal locator beacon to my parachute harness?

A: You can, but be careful. I suggest having a master parachute rigger help you here. It may seem like a simple job, but I've had parachutes come into my shop with various "owner modifications" that cover the rip cord pocket or block the view of the rip cord. This could ruin your day in the event you need to find that shiny little handle in a hurry. I actually make a kit that is designed to fit a SPOT and attaches easily around the main lift webbing of your harness (that's the webbing that runs vertically from your waist to your shoulders.) Go to my website and click on "S.M.A.K. Pak." Whatever you use, always attach it to

the side opposite the rip cord. Another option on some harnesses is to attach it just below the rip cord pocket. A rigger can help make modifications to your kit so it will fit on your parachute harnesses. Having a survival kit that is not attached to you does no good in the event of a bailout. A survival kit stowed neatly in the back of your aircraft is called camping gear!

Let's talk briefly about the popular SPOT locator and satellite messenger. Like other similar devices, it comes with a little carry bag that easily attaches to your parachute harness or slips over the chest strap. Unfortunately, this and other cases are usually pretty flimsy and the Velcro would more than likely rip apart during a bailout and parachute deployment. There goes your SPOT! The

factory case needs to be beefed up, particularly the closing flap. I always install a snap over the Velcro to make extra sure the pocket stays securely closed. Most of these devices will fit into my larger Deluxe S.M.A.K. Pak survival kit with room to spare for additional survival items. When securing anything to your harness, or on your person, make sure it will not fall off or come open during opening shock, when you'll experience the highest G-loading. Losing your survival gear could ruin your evening's plans and result in a long lonely night somewhere and possibly a long hike back to safety, if you haven't been injured on landing.

Q: I have to remove my cushions to fit into my aircraft with my chute on. Do I need to pad the seat back or bottom?

A: Usually, some type of thin padding needs to be placed under the bottom of your seatpack or behind your backpack to protect it from rubbing on the hard surface that remains after your have removed the pads. Even if the seat back or bottom is smooth, you still need to do something. Just the pressure from a hard surface will soon rub against the rip cord protector flap, leaving a faint outline of the rip cord cable and pins inside. Over time, it will rub completely through the material and need some kind of repair. From the first day you receive your parachute it needs protection from hard surfaces so it will last its full lifetime of 20 years. A common solution if you've removed all of the padding is to take something like a piece of tightly woven carpet remnant and install it on the seat back, bottom, or both. It doesn't have to be very thick to protect your parachute container from unnecessary wear and tear. If you're wearing a seatpack, pad the bottom under the container and behind you as well. You will definitely want to cover any exposed Velcro after removing your aircraft's seat pads. If the scratchy part rubs against your harness/container, within a few flights it will look as if a cat clawed your container and will require repairs.

It should be noted that when this new regulation comes out, existing repacks will not be automatically extended.

My last comment is an update on going from the current 120-day repack cycle to 180 days. I've got good news!

According to my sources in the Federal Aviation Administration, it is now in the final stages of being turned into law and will happen on or before February 20, 2009. Hopefully it will occur sooner. Maybe it will even be a done deal by the time you read this stirring edition of "Ask Allen!"

I would also like to thank my son, Darrin, for his assistance in this three-plus year project. I could not have done it without his expert technical writing ability.

It should be noted that when this new regulation comes out, **existing repacks will not be automatically extended.** The new 180-day repack cycle will only take effect when you take your parachute in to be packed and recertified by your parachute rigger.

Thank you and keep your questions coming!

Allen Silver is the owner of Silver Parachute Sales and is always available to answer your questions about parachutes. Send your questions to Allen@silverparachutes.com.

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