



## Ask Allen

A master rigger answers your questions about parachutes.

By Allen Silver, IAC 431160

**Q:** It looks like the flying season is done where I live...how do I properly store my parachute?

**A:** As we enter the winter months, you might find that sitting by a cozy, warm fireplace with a hot drink is more desirable than flying in severe cold weather. Or maybe your aircraft is down for several months of maintenance. Whatever the reason, you need to know how to properly store your parachute. Your parachute and other survival equipment deserve a cozy place to spend the winter, too!

This is a great time to store your parachute in an appropriate place to ensure that next spring it will pass the tests necessary to return it to service. Make sure you have a cool, dry, dark place to properly store your parachute. A perfect place is indoors, at room temperature, where you live, on a shelf off the floor. Don't forget your carrying bag. Place your parachute in it for added protection. If you don't have a carrying bag, an old suitcase will work just fine. Your parachute needs to be in something. You can even go one step further and purchase a plastic storage container that you can securely close to keep out air, moisture, and critters. If you live in a humid climate, place a few desiccants in the container alongside your parachute to protect against moisture.

Always store your parachute away from bright lights and especially out of direct sunlight. Over time, both forms of light can break down the nylon that makes up your parachute system. This is especially true of the UV rays from the sun. Remember, this is a life-saving piece of equipment and needs special attention.

I always tell my clients that if they are going to store their parachute for more than six months, this is the perfect time to put the chute on and practice pulling your rip cord! Once opened, remove all the rubber bands and toss them away. Your parachute rigger can replace the rubber bands when you take your parachute out of winter hibernation. Under the right conditions (typically involving high humidity) the rubber bands can deteriorate and stick to your parachute lines or canopy material. If this happens, it almost guarantees the loss of your parachute.

This may be a good time to send your parachute back to the manufacturer or a qualified master rigger for a thorough inspection, especially if you will not need it

back right away. I have used this extra time to remove my customer's parachutes from their harnesses/containers. I then specially clean the harnesses/containers to remove built-up residue from sunscreen, body oils, and other grime that has accumulated over time. Do not try to clean your harness/container yourself. This requires special dry-cleaning so the material is not damaged or weakened.

**Q:** Why did the quick ejector snap that holds my leg straps on break?

**A:** Basically, there are two types of snaps used on parachute harnesses. The B-12 and the ejector snap (see photo no. 1). While the B-12 snap rarely breaks or causes a problem, the ejector snap is very popular because of the ease of getting out of your harness. It does need a little tender loving care when opening it, and it does require a little bit of maintenance to ensure it works smoothly.

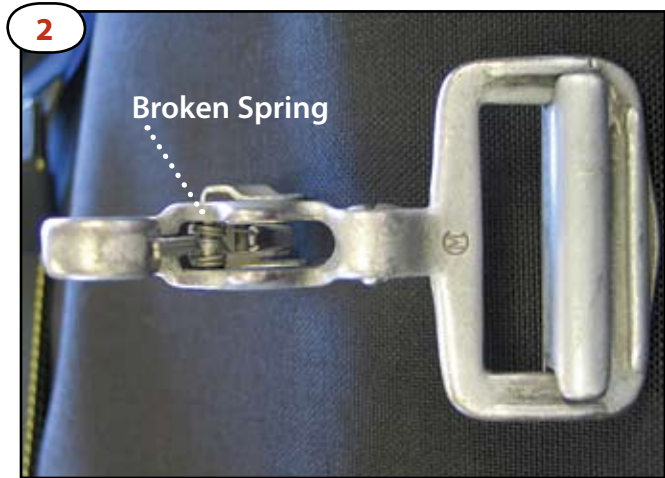
I like quick ejectors because they allow you to get out of your harness, well...quickly. This is especially important if you have to bail out in high winds. Being dragged across a rough landing area is not an option you want to think about. Over time, hyper extending the opening latch will first weaken and then break the spring (see photo no. 2) that helps keep the release closed. Open the snap gently! Repeatedly yanking open the release lever will eventually break the spring.

Even with the spring broken, the ejector snap can still be safely used as long as you make sure it is pushed down and locked securely over the detent ball (see photo no. 3) on the side of the snap. Just make extra sure that your leg strap is tight and the snap will not come open. It will still need to be replaced at the next repack. The broken snap must be carefully cut off the harness and replaced with a separable ejector snap that screws into place. Did I mention this is expensive? The snap alone will run you about \$45, not including the labor. That's why I recommend the B-12 snaps for fixed base operators and flying clubs that have multiple users.

If you do have quick ejector snaps, I suggest that you clean them once in awhile. An old toothbrush works great. Carefully open the snap and brush the surfaces to

remove any dirt. Then spray something like WD-40 on it while working the latch back and forth. Use only a small amount. Also protect the harness/container from overspray by wrapping a rag or paper towels around the snap. Have a warm winter and keep the questions coming in!

**Special Note:** On August 20 the public comment period ended for changing the repack cycle from 120 to 180 days. Now it's in the FAA's hands. It has 18 months (by law) to approve or reject the proposal (notice of proposed rulemaking). I believe it will pass, especially with all your favorable comments. I want to thank you for them. See you in February.



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