



ASK allen

Allen Silver, master rigger and owner of Silver Parachute Sales, has been serving aerobatic and glider pilots worldwide since 1972. Questions regarding your parachute should be sent to Allen@SilverParachutes.com.

Q : I'm interested in purchasing a used parachute. What should I look for?

A : This is a good question. This year alone I've seen two or three good deals be worthless. First and foremost, do not buy anything from someone you know or from someplace online unless the seller will consent to a parachute rigger (of your choice) looking at it as a condition of purchase. The rigger will be able to tell you within a minute if it's airworthy, and the rigger should not charge you for this service. If the parachute is approaching 20 years of age, I would reconsider. (For information on how I price a used parachute, read my article "All Parachutes Are Not Created Equal.") Be aware the canopy inside the container may be a lot older than the container that holds the parachute. Most of the manufacturers recommend their parachutes be removed from service after 20 years. Is it legal in the United States to pack it after 20 years? Technically yes, but it becomes a liability issue if something goes wrong. Most professionals who rig full time agree with the 20-year limit. Twenty years is a long time to be exposed to UV damage and other contaminants regardless of how good your parachute looks from the outside.

Q : Can a jump center (drop zone rigger) pack my parachute?

A : Of course it can, but you need to ask some questions. You need to make sure it has adequate facilities to pack your parachute (FAR 65.127). Many drop zone riggers are familiar only with the rectangular parachutes sky divers use, and some have never seen a round parachute that almost all pilots use, but legally they can pack it. All an FAA certificated rigger needs to pack your parachute is the proper certification (FAR 65.121), a back rating for all back chutes, and a seat rating for your seat pack. Don't hesitate to ask to see the rigger's FAA certificate. And make sure the person packing your chute has the current packing manual, service bulletins, or airworthiness directives (most are online). Also check that the jump center has a clean surface big enough to properly stretch out your parachute for proper inspection and packing. I find this is sometimes a problem with a jump center that does not routinely pack round parachutes. Most important, you need to be comfortable with the person who packs your parachute.

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