



Bailing Out Over Water

Just Pull the Darned Rip Cord

A happy new year to all. The weather in many parts of the country is leaning toward more sun and less snow. It won't be long before you'll be out carving holes in the sky. Now is the time to think about making sure your aircraft and all related equipment have been dusted off and are ready for takeoff. Just as important is to make sure your emergency procedures are also dusted off and reviewed.

My column this month is shorter than most. I would like to think the time saved reading a couple more paragraphs would be better spent by you thinking about and practicing your emergency procedures.

Each of you and your aircraft are unique, and one scenario for survival may work well for someone else and not for you. Now is the time to make sure your escape plan is committed to memory just like many of you have for your family and home in case the unthinkable should happen there.

Now, stepping off that soapbox, I would like to discuss a subject that often comes up with my customers, and that is how do I get stable in free fall, in the event I have to bail out? It's unlikely you're a seasoned sky diver, so let's not confuse getting stable like a sky diver with your immediate need to "Look, Find, Reach" and pull the rip cord.

If everything goes well, and you manage to get clear of your aircraft and pull the rip cord before you make a lasting impression on terra firma, give yourself a pat on the back ... after you land. This is not the image you want to make trying to get stable. I have many articles on my website worth reviewing before you blast off for the upcoming season, but for now I would like to discuss the proper body position once you clear your aircraft.

For the vast majority of you, **getting stable like a sky diver is not going to happen.** Attempting to do so, thinking you need to get stable before pulling the rip cord, will probably have dire consequences. I don't want anyone to make a lasting impression like in Wile E. Coyote cartoons. I hope I made myself clear. Run-

ning out of time and altitude trying to get stable is not an option.

Your parachute knows up from down. All you need to do is give it a chance to open. Would it be better if you were stable? It might help reduce the chance of getting tangled with your parachute or causing some

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type of malfunction, but this is not the time to find out if sky diving is your next adventure. You're quickly running out of options.

Speaking of time, your parachute will need two to three seconds to fully open, going as slow as it will ever go. So, don't spend too much time looking at the scenery. Once clear of your aircraft, find your rip cord and pull it as soon as you can. Remember the distance it takes for your parachute to open (within two to three seconds) will vary depending on the attitude of your aircraft when you bailed out.

I do have a few suggestions to help prevent any problems deploying your parachute. **First**, never take your eyes off the rip cord handle once you've bailed out. The harness may have shifted, making for an even more exciting day locating the rip cord. **Second**, keep your legs tight together. This is especially important for you guys, if you don't want to be speaking in a soprano voice for a couple of weeks. Keeping your legs together will also help prevent your parachute from going between them and possibly entangling with something. **Third**, do not grab any portion of your parachute as it's deploying unless it's caught on something.

Did I mention getting rid of your rip cord handle? It certainly would make a nice souvenir, but the cable could catch on a part of your deploying parachute, preventing it from fully opening. Remember, the opening process happens in a flash. However, if you end up with the rip cord handle fused to your hand after your parachute opens, it will make a nice souvenir. What I would do is hastily stuff it down the front of my flight suit or shirt. If that doesn't work, you could also hang it over your thumb. This way you can still reach up and steer your parachute. You do remember it has steering handles, don't you? If not, have your parachute rigger show them to you at your next repack. Of course you could just toss it away immediately after opening, freeing your hands for better steering. Whatever you decide, do it quickly.

If you hang the rip cord handle on your thumb, it also gives you the option of dropping it as you near the ground, if you find yourself near power lines. A metal rip cord contacting the power lines is not something you want to happen just for the sake of a souvenir. By the way, what are you doing near the power lines? I've told you in previous articles to stay away from them. You never want to land too close to roads where power lines may be found, let alone the vehicular traffic. I can see the headline now: "Pilot makes successful bailout and is run over by car after landing on road."

Have a great flying season, and please consider a bailout seminar.

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