

CARE & USE OF PARACHUTES

Parachutes should be worn on all flights provided that the glider is built to accommodate them.

Care of parachutes

Parachutes are life-saving devices and so should be treated with special care.

When asked to get parachutes for a training flight, be sure to get two chutes owned by Lasham Gliding Society and not just any two chutes found in the parachute store. They are not all LGS property.

Dampness affects the speed at which a parachute opens. Even a second's delay can make a big difference if you are falling at terminal velocity. Therefore, keep parachutes in their bags to protect them from rain, dirt, damp, sun and careless handling. Almost every pilot at Lasham picks up parachutes by their shoulder straps. This is incorrect. Sport parachutists treat parachutes like a baby. Pick up the parachute by the body to avoid breaking the cotton-tacking pieces.

When not about to be used for a flight, keep parachutes in their bags and put them in the launch-point vehicle. Never put a parachute on the ground. At the end of the flying-day, all parachutes in gliders and the launch-point vehicle should be put in the parachute store-room in the clubhouse, where they will be warm and dry.

Only use LGS chutes in K13's. Other types of parachutes may be damaged. There should be enough parachutes for LGS gliders even allowing for the fact that some may be away being re-packed.

There will be the odd occasion when private owners will need a parachute. No-one wants to prevent someone flying on a good day for lack of a parachute and so the CFI or the general manager may authorise one parachute to be borrowed on the odd occasion but only after LGS's needs have been satisfied.

Inspecting a parachute

Inspect your parachute for stains, bent pins, fraying seams and an un-stowed rip-cord handle. Look at the metal knob at the end of the rip-cord that stops the handle falling off. They have been known to fail. If any part of the canopy or any rigging lines are showing, it is unserviceable.

Get your parachute re-packed when the re-pack date has expired according to the re-pack label. Unless the manufacturer/re-packer has specified otherwise, the BGA's Laws & Rules recommends a re-pack interval of only three months.

Putting on a parachute

If you put your left arm through the harness first, you are less likely to pull the rip-cord accidentally as you reach round for the other strap. The parachute harness should be tightened so that you cannot stand up straight. (A loose harness could cause injury.)

Fasten the leg straps first and then the chest straps. When taking off a parachute, undo the chest straps first. If a parachute were to deploy on the ground, it is generally felt that it would be less dangerous to be dragged by the leg straps than the chest strap. For this reason do not walk about wearing a parachute with the leg-straps undone.

Use of parachutes

Mentally rehearse which knobs you would pull and which straps you would undo before every flight. This can save a second or two in an emergency.

The greatest risk is from collision. It is unlikely that you will be able to assess the damage after a collision and even if the glider still seems to be flying properly, there may be a structural failure which will manifest itself lower down. If in doubt, jump. You are more valuable than the glider.

Jettison the glider's canopy first. If you undo your seat straps first, you can be thrown against the canopy, and then be unable to reach the jettison knob. If you then cannot jettison the glider's canopy, at least you would still be strapped in for the impact. The canopy may be held in place by air pressure, so you may have to push it away.

Stand up and jump out, pulling the rip-cord as soon as you are clear. You may need some effort to pull the rip-cord, but you can use two hands.

Steering a parachute

An emergency parachute is circular in shape after it is fully open but there are mesh-covered drive vents located at the rear of the canopy that remove this symmetry. The drive vents make the canopy steer-able and create an air speed of about 10kph (depending upon body weight and altitude) in the direction you are facing.

Parachutes generally have four risers (these are the straps that attach the harness to the canopy). You turn to the right by pulling down the right rear riser by 15cm to 30cm (similarly for a left turn). The parachute will continue turning until you stop pulling. It takes about 8 - 10 seconds to complete a full 360 degree turn. Try to land into wind.

Landing with a parachute

Landing has been compared to jumping from a first-floor window. However this does not convey the lateral speed that you may also have because of the wind. Think of the window being in the upper deck of a double-decker bus moving at 10mph. The horizontal speed will add to the shock of landing.

Keep your feet and knees together and bend your knees. Put your chin on your chest, clench your teeth, hunch your shoulders and hold the webbing high up. Keep your elbows in. The trick is not to face fully forward or backwards to your direction of travel but to land side-on, immediately crumpling and rolling onto your thighs, buttocks then your shoulder. This dissipates the energy. If you try to stay upright, you increase the chances of injury.

Quickly get up, run round the canopy and pull in the lines to deflate it. Otherwise you could be dragged along the ground.

If landing in trees, keep your feet together and raise them slightly before you arrive. Keep your elbows tight to your stomach and your hands over your face. This will help protect delicate areas. If suspended, wait for help before trying to climb down.

If suspended from power wires, avoid touching anything at all and let no-one approach you until the power is confirmed as off.

At all costs, try to avoid landing in water. If this occurs the canopy will land on top of you. Do not panic. Following a line will take you to the edge of the canopy and so clear of it. Parachutes for re-packing

Repacking

Privately owned parachutes can be repacked by informing the Lasham Office who will write down your details. You should then put the parachute in its bag in the cupboard within the parachute store. Bags should be clearly marked with a name or a glider number. Returned parachutes will be placed on the left-hand side of the same cupboard. Check the date on the shoulder-strap to ensure that it has been re-packed.