Tandem NEWSLETTER

Summer 2007 Newsletter from Strong Enterprises, the parachute company with imagination
Division of S.E. Inc. - 11236 Satellite Blvd. Orlando, FL 32837 - Tel. (407) 859-9317 Fax (407) 850-6978
www.strongparachutes.com sales@strongparachutes.com

Welcome to our Newsletter.

Strong Enterprises continues to publish the Tandem Newsletter as a way to provide our Strong Tandem Instructors and Examiners with an up to date educational resource of tandem skydiving information. Our primary goal is to increase safety by providing continued education for our instructors. ■

I am my Brother's keeper.

One of the greatest attributes a skydiver can possess is the presence of mind to always be looking out for his (or her) fellow skydivers, while on the ground, in the plane, during freefall, canopy descent, and even walking off the field. This is such an important part of our sport, especially so in tandem skydiving, as we use the most complex gear ever made for skydiving. We are responsible for 2 lives, and, if we are lucky, there may be only a handful of other people on the

drop zone or in the plane that, will even understand how our gear works and be able to check it and notice any problems before exiting the aircraft. Fun jumpers have it relatively easy, as anyone with a keen eye and an A-License is trained to pick up on a sport rig with a problem, but very few people, other than tandem instructors, can look at another tandem instructor wearing a tandem rig and be able to tell if everything is in order. That is why it is vital for us to be vigilant in our dedication to protecting each other. As we stand in the boarding area, as we board the plane, and as we ride to altitude, we must all make time to visually inspect our fellow instructor's gear, and their passenger's gear. We have the ability to catch packing errors and other issues before they become a serious problem. If you see something you don't like, SAY SOMETHING. Always be looking, the life you save may be your best friends and their passenger. Do you have videographers and Loads Organizers that you trust? Why not take some time and show them how the Dual Hawk works and show them what some of the more common packing errors and gear issues look like. Every person you show how to spot problems is one more person that has "Got Your Back", quite literally. ■

Table of CONTENTS

PROCEDURE, PROCEDURE, PROCEDURE!

Everything we do as Tandem Instructors must be centered on proper procedures. This ensures that as the more we do something, the less likely we are to deviate from the appropriate action required. We have a set passenger hook up procedure that we must follow on every passenger hook up: RIGHT SIDE LATERAL, STUDENT RIPCORD, LEFT SIDE LATERAL, LEFT SHOULDER SNAP, RIGHT SHOULDER SNAP.

We repeat the same steps again and again, as the repetition reinforces our muscle memory, there by reducing the possibility of failing to do a complete hook up. We use a similar procedure in doing our post drogue deployment handles check:

- PASSENGER RIPCORD,
- INSTRUCTOR RIPCORD,
- CUTAWAY, RESERVE.

We develop this procedure for muscle memory in freefall, so that in the event of an emergency, we are more likely to pull our handles in the proper sequence, having rehearsed it time and time again in drogue-fall. ■

[Tandem NEWS]

Hats, Suits, Altimeters &Ripcords.

Strong Enterprises has always believed that tandem skydiving should be viewed as a student training method as opposed to a carnival ride. A large part of that philosophy is based in our policy that all tandem students should be provided with jumpsuits, soft helmets, altimeters and ripcords. Each piece of gear provides our students with valuable safety attributes.

❖ Jumpsuits

The student jumpsuit serves many functions on a tandem skydive:

1. Serves to reduce drag of the passenger, thereby giving the instructor additional control of the student and the skydive.
2. Prevents grass stains to students clothing in the event of a slide in landing, or a tumble resulting from an off center stand up landing.
3. Provides the student with a better sense of actually being a student skydiver, as opposed to being just a passenger on an amusement park ride.

❖ Ripcord:

The student ripcord serves many functions on a tandem skydive:

1. When trained to do so, gives the student passenger the opportunity to participate in the skydive by releasing the drogue when prompted to do so by the instructor.
2. Complies with Strong Tandem Policy (Appendix A – TICC Syllabus):
3. ALL TANDEM PASSENGERS MUST BE PROVIDED A MAIN RIPCORD, AN ALTIMETER AND INSTRUCTION ON HOW TO USE BOTH.
4. (There have been two documented cases of student passengers saving the lives of their instructors by releasing the drogue when their instructors failed to do so.)
5. Provides the student with a better sense of actually being a student skydiver, as opposed to just being a passenger on an amusement park ride.

❖ Soft Helmets

The "frappe hat" or soft leather helmet serves many functions on a tandem skydive:

1. Protects the student's head as the tandem pair exits the aircraft.
2. Protects the student's head on landing.
3. Protects the instructor's face in the event of a hard landing. A student's bare head snapping backwards on a hard landing can easily generate enough force to injure the face of the instructor, including the possibility of knocking teeth out.
4. Provides the student with a better sense of actually being a student skydiver, as opposed to being just a passenger on an amusement park ride.

❖ Altimeters:

The altimeter serves many functions on a tandem skydive:

1. Serves as an auxiliary device in the event that the instructor's primary altimeter malfunctions.
2. Allows the student passenger to actually participate in the skydive by being given the opportunity to maintain altitude awareness during their skydive.
3. Complies with Strong Tandem Policy (Appendix A – TICC Syllabus):
4. ALL TANDEM PASSENGES MUST BE PROVIDED A MAIN RIPCORD, AN ALTIMTER AND INSTRUCTION ON HOW TO USE BOTH.
5. Provides the student with a better sense of actually being a student skydiver, as opposed to just being a passenger on an amusement park ride. ■

Tandem Examiner Spotlight.

Strong Enterprises would like recognize Strong Tandem Examiner Keith LaRivierre, from Jumptown (MSPC) in Orange, MA in this edition of our Strong Tandem Newsletter.

Keith has been skydiving for 32 years and has made over 5100 skydives to date. He has been a tandem instructor for 22 years and has made over 2600 tandem skydives. Keith has been a Strong Tandem Examiner for the last 14 years and has trained over 70 new Strong Tandem Instructors making over 160 Passenger Evaluation skydives.

The interview

We asked Keith to give us a little of his insight on holding successful Tandem Instructor Certification Courses, and here is what he had to say:

"When I talk to someone about taking a certification course, one of the things I ask them to do is read the course material and complete the written test before coming to the course. I think this is a good way to gauge how serious the candidate is about getting the rating, and what their sense of responsibility is for doing things the way they're supposed to be done."

When asked about today's tandem environment, Keith replied:

"I think the most overlooked aspect of being a tandem instructor is the concept that it's not the tandem instructor's jump, it's the student's jump. We're there to try to make the experience as safe and enjoyable as possible for the student, our customer. What we need to remember is that tandem jumps get to be routine for us, but it's a unique experience for the passenger. We have the opportunity to make tandem jumps and get paid for it, but the students aren't there for our amusement. If you get bored doing plain vanilla tandem jumps, then go do something else that excites you, but don't compromise the safety of the student's experience because you're bored and want to do something more exciting to amuse yourself."

Do you have a tandem instructor we should spotlight?

Tips From The Field

We had an instructor writes us regarding a ripcord technique that he found added an additional layer of safety to his skydives that he wanted to share. Here's his tip:

"I have heard of an ongoing debate over which handle the tandem instructor should pull first to release the drogue. Some say the student ripcord, while others prefer to use the instructor handle. Here's my thought on the subject. As our passengers constantly change in height and size, it makes sense to say that the passenger ripcord will never be in exactly the same location on each tandem skydive. That said, if an instructor habitually uses his instructor handle as his primary drogue release, there may come a day where he may brain lock and not be able to locate it, or it may be a hard pull, and either way he is now forced to resort to his secondary ripcord, which in this case would be his passenger ripcord. He must now reach down and pull his student's ripcord which may be harder to locate and he could waste precious time locating it in an emergency. My procedure is to always use the passenger ripcord as my primary release, so that in the event I am unable to locate it or release it, I will have a much easier time locating my secondary (instructor) ripcord during an emergency. I always like to think one step ahead of the game, so whether I am letting my student pull the passenger ripcord, or pulling it myself, I always reach down, find and take a hold of the passenger ripcord about 1000ft before I intend to pull it. If I am intending to deploy at 5500ft, I will reach down and locate the student ripcord at 6500ft. That way, if I have any trouble locating it, the trouble occurs above my pull altitude and provides me time to deal with it. I'd rather know I have a problem at 6500ft than at 5500ft, as it gives me 6-8 more seconds to solve my problems."

After following this same procedure over 1000 times on tandem jumps, this instructor found himself on a "typical" tandem jump, and at 6500ft, reached down to grasp the student ripcord preparing for a 5500ft deployment. He was surprised to find though that on this typical deployment, that he couldn't locate his primary passenger handle. He tried twice for it, and then calmly brought his hand up to just below his cutaway handle and located his secondary instructor handle, and released the drogue at 5000ft. What could have been a high stress scenario was a low stress test of this jumper's procedure. No one, not even the videographer noticed anything out of the ordinary. This jumper had a plan that he prepared for over a 1000 times, and when it finally did happen, he was more than ready for it. ■

Jump Story

A highly experience tandem instructor is having a great day making tandem jumps. Each load that takes off though doesn't get as high as the load before, as weather is slowly rolling in. 1st load is to 13,500ft, 2nd load is to 12,000ft, 3rd load gets 10,000f and the 4th load gets about 8000ft. It's clear to see that the clouds are continuing to get lower, and the following load takes off planning on getting about 7000ft and calling it a day after that load. This highly experienced tandem instructor elects to make one more tandem from 7000ft (the student was given the opportunity to return at another time for a full altitude jump or make the jump from this lower altitude that day, and she elected to go that day at around 7000ft), and the plane took off. As expected, the load gets to 7000ft, and the tandem pair exits. At the time, the instructor had approximately 700 tandem jumps, all uneventful. Now here he was at 7000ft, last load of the day for tandems, and once he exited the aircraft, found himself in a side spin. This Jump Story has a happy ending as the instructor had watched Strong Enterprises "Side Spin Phenomenon" tape many times, and had rehearsed the procedure many times on the ground. He was able to stop the side spin using the technique that he learned, stabilize, return belly to earth, deploy the drogue and subsequently release the drogue. All of which occurred between 7000ft and 3500ft AGL, there was zero margin for error on that jump. The instructor did as he was trained to do, and this Jump Story ended with a happy ending. But think about it, do you think the instructor would have preferred 3000 or 4000 more feet to deal with his problem? What can we learn from this?

1) Side spins can happen at any time, expect them on every jump and be prepared to handle them on every jump.

2) The techniques in Strong Enterprises "Side Spin Phenomenon" video do work, so practice them.

3) When we lower our exit altitude we take away precious time to deal with problems. ■

When asked about the worst part of being an Examiner, Keith replied:

"The worst moment is having to send a candidate home because they don't take this seriously and fail to prepare for the certification course."

When asked about the most rewarding aspect of being an Examiner, Keith replied:

"Watching an instructor I've trained do a good job on a difficult tandem jump."

If you say something to all the tandem masters out there, what would it be?

"The jump's not over until you're safely back in the building."

What about for the new guys (and girls) fresh off their ratings courses, what advice do you have for them?

"Don't let your enthusiasm overpower your judgement; know your limitations. "

Any final thoughts?

"Train your students well, check your gear, check your handles, and marry an understanding spouse."

■

Always remember to do a handles check!

The Rigging Loft: Unwinding Brake Lines Prevents Tension Knots

How many times have we landed on a windy day and handed off a toggle to our tandem "Catchers" to help collapse our canopies after landing? On a busy day, a toggle could be handed off a dozen or more times. When it is handed back to the instructor, chances are that the steering line has been twisted one or more times as the catcher eiher drops or returns the toggle when done. These twists can add up quickly, producing a barber pole effect, and after a long day or weekend jumping, the brake lines on your main canopies can begin to tighten due to the added stress of these twists. If left unchecked, this can easily lead to a tension knot of the brake line, and a possibly necessitate an otherwise unnecessary cutaway.

The good news is that it's a quick fix to ensure the reduction of potential tension knots by training our packers to untwist and run down the brake lines after each jump. Even on a busy drop zone, this practice takes only seconds to do, and can add additional life to the line set of the canopy while at the same time reducing the potential for a tension knot situation. ■

Did You Know...

The year in, year out success of the SET-400 main canopy has proven it to be the backbone of the Strong Dual Hawk tandem system. It's known around the world as a soft opening, reliable, sturdy and fun to fly canopy. So when our canopy designers began thinking about expanding our tandem canopy line, the choice was easy. They shed some fabric, resigned the line set to scale, added a radical redesign of the steering lines to reduce toggle pressure and the SET-366 was born! Keep an eye out for the SET-366, you may see one on your dropzone before you know it! ■

Ideas and Improvements

What can we do for you? Strong Enterprises is committed to providing the safest tandem gear in the field today. We have some of the best minds in the sport constantly thinking about your safety and your passenger's safety. If you have an idea or suggestion, please let us know. We also welcome suggestions on any other product we manufacture. You can use the e-mail address tandem@strongparachutes.com ■

Blue Skies!