
UNINSURED UNITED PARACHUTE TECHNOLOGIES, LLC.



Attention all Tandem Instructors
Please review this before making your next Tandem Jump.

Tandem Hand Camera (HandCam) Hazards Advisory:

The use of hand cameras (HandCam/HandCams) has been a part of tandem skydiving for the last twenty years or so, with significant movement towards an almost global use of HandCams occurring a little over a decade ago. As a result, more and more tandem instructors are adding the use of HandCams to their day to day roles and responsibilities as Sigma Tandem Instructors. UPT has an established minimum performance standard for HandCam usage that requires instructors to have made 200 tandem jumps before using a HandCam on a tandem jump. Still, despite this very clear minimum requirement, UPT continues to learn of, and impose sanctions on, UPT Sigma Tandem Instructor Rating holders for violations of this safety requirement. HandCam use by any and all non-HandCam qualified UPT Sigma Tandem Instructors must stop. UPT is calling on everyone involved in the HandCam use process on a global level, from dropzone owners, to Safety & Training Advisors, and ultimately to each Sigma Tandem Instructor who is exercising the privileges of their Sigma Tandem Rating, to ensure strict adherence to this standard, or the minimum tandem experience requirement of their national skydiving federation.

The use of HandCams on tandem jumps, coupled with tandem instructor complacency, has also apparently contributed to a decline in tandem instructors meeting basic tandem performance standards. Of great concern in recent years, is a resultant spike in drogue bridle and drogue canopy entanglement incidents. More and more Tandem Instructors who were originally taught to “exit stable” and to “fly their bodies” are no longer performing these required skill sets after they begin jumping with a HandCam. Instead, they have adopted a personally created “new normal”, in which they exit the aircraft by rolling out, left hand down, head low, and roll over, timing their drogue deployments based on their perception of when they will roll belly to earth. This performance creates horrendous risk exposure and is frequently the root cause of tandem drogue entanglements.

Also of concern today is a potential increase in the incidence of hand camera/glove assembly entanglements with a steering/control line of the tandem main parachute. As HandCam usage on tandem jump increases and as setups vary in size, design and function, the possibility that a steering toggle and/or control line will entangle with the HandCam set up is ever-present. Due to this possibility and its potential to cause a critical delay in executing emergency procedures if not untangled, released or cut free in a timely manner, anyone using a HandCam on a tandem skydive must ensure the following prior to/during each HandCam tandem jump:

- **That the HandCam glove/mount can be removed with a single movement and/or by a single point of release.** If the glove is secured to the hand by a Velcro strap, the Velcro strap must be easily accessible and quickly releasable.
- **That the Tandem Instructor HandCam user does not violate the Emergency Procedure Decision Altitude “hard deck” 3000ft AGL criterion attempting to untangle the HandCam/Glove assembly from a control line or toggle.**
- **That if a HandCam entanglement situation occurs that cannot be resolved by 3000ft AGL, the tandem instructor completely releases the HandCam setup, even if it results in losing the camera.** This release must be initiated at an altitude that is high enough to ensure that the minimum 3000ft Emergency Procedure Decision Altitude criterion is still met.
- **That Tandem Instructors jumping with a HandCam also carry a hook knife.** The easiest way to resolve a HandCam set up entanglement may simply be to cut the control line.

(These HandCam entanglement directives are written as a direct result of a recent tandem incident that involved a tandem instructor apparently continuing to attempt to untangle a HandCam setup entanglement with a control line well below the 3000ft Emergency Procedure Decision Altitude.)

Tom Noonan
Tandem Program Director
Uninsured United Parachute Technologies, LLC