
UNINSURED UNITED PARACHUTE TECHNOLOGIES, LLC.



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

Emergency Procedure Hard Deck Altitude Adherence:

The UPT Sigma Tandem Manual, on page 93, states:

“Reserve Deployment: Do not delay the execution of reserve procedures. If the situation calls for it, make a decision and carry it out. Minimum reserve initiation is 3000ft (900m) AGL.”

This recommended minimum decision altitude exists to give the tandem instructor enough time and altitude to perform emergency procedures with the highest probability of a successful outcome. The altitude not only serves as a minimum reserve deployment altitude to prevent an AAD activation during a cutaway, it also serves to provide the tandem instructor with time to navigate to an appropriate landing area free of obstacles and to prepare for landing. The concept of a minimum decision altitude has been the backbone of skydiving safety protocols for decades. Its observance has resulted in successful outcomes time and time again.

Today, however, we are seeing a growing trend of skydivers, including tandem instructors, violating their minimum decision altitudes while descending under malfunctioning main parachutes. This phenomenon tends to occur for one or both of two reasons:

- Loss of altitude awareness.
- Consciously continuing to attempt to fix a malfunctioning main parachute below the established “hard deck.”

While loss of altitude awareness as a contributing factor can certainly be identified as a factor in tandem skydiving accidents and incidents, a related concern, specifically among the tandem instructor population, is the deliberate choice to ride a malfunctioning main parachute through their decision altitude in a continuing attempt to fix their malfunctioning main parachute. This scenario is typically seen with line twist and tension knot malfunctions, as these tend to be low speed malfunctions that look “almost right” and that appear to only require a small change in their parachute’s configuration to correct.

All too often though, these tandem instructors are unable to correct their malfunction, leaving them no choice then but to initiate their cutaway procedures well below their decision altitude. Thankfully, this scenario rarely involves a deployment height below that needed for the reserve to successfully deploy, but it often then puts the tandem pair in an initial open canopy position that is low to the ground, leaving them with limited time to assess their landing options and to maneuver to a safe landing. In its worst case however, a tandem instructor can spend so

much time attempting to fix a malfunctioning main parachute below their 3000ft AGL decision altitude that by the time they realize they cannot fix it, they are so low that they have taken away any reasonable chance for a cutaway and reserve deployment to result in a successful outcome.

We are asking our UPT Tandem Instructor Rating holders to make a renewed pledge and a conscious decision, prior to every tandem jump that they make, to adhere to all of their recommended decision altitudes, including minimum exit altitude (7500ft AGL), minimum opening altitude (fully open parachute by 4000ft AGL) and **as it pertains to the critical nature of tandem safety, to adhere to a “hard deck” minimum decision altitude of 3,000ft AGL for emergency procedure initiation.**

(This advisory directive has been written after review of a recent tandem incident that involved a tandem instructor apparently not following their emergency procedure decision and procedure execution altitude and manually activating the reserve parachute at an altitude well below that necessary for a successful reserve canopy opening.)

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