

SAFETY INFORMATION

05/25

IMPORTANT ADVISORY

Reserve Deployment During Aircraft Exit – Lessons for All Jumpers

Learning from an APF incident at Tully Aerodrome, Australia (September 2025)

British Skydiving members are encouraged to review the following safety Information, based on a recently published **Australian Parachute Federation (APF) preliminary report** into a serious incident involving an unintentional reserve deployment during aircraft exit .

This information is shared in the interests of **incident prevention and collective learning**.



What happened?

During a large **16-way formation skydiving jump**, an experienced jumper was positioned as **front float** during exit from a short Cessna Caravan. As part of the normal climb-out, the jumper pressed forward against the aircraft door frame to create space for others.

In doing so, the jumper's **reserve handle (Pud)** made contact with the aircraft wing flap, resulting in an **unintentional reserve deployment while still in contact with the aircraft**.

The reserve parachute inflated and became **entangled with the aircraft's tailplane**, suspending the jumper from the aircraft. Other jumpers exited promptly once the situation was recognised, and the pilot declared a MAYDAY.

The jumper was eventually able to **cut the lines of the reserve parachute via their hook-knife**, enter freefall, and deploy their main parachute. Despite further complications caused by torn reserve material and lines, the jumper successfully landed under a controllable main canopy. The aircraft also landed safely.

The jumper sustained a **minor lower-leg injury**, and the aircraft suffered **damage to the horizontal stabiliser**.



Why this matters

This incident occurred:

- In good weather
- On a well-briefed jump (last day of a five-day FS event)
- Involving an experienced skydiver (2009 jumps)
- Using serviceable, modern equipment

- A very similar incident occurred at a UK PTO in April 2017, where a reserve handle was dislodged by another skydiver whilst keying the exit of a big-way formation. In this incident, the reserve deployed underneath the horizontal stabiliser.

It highlights that **serious incidents can still arise during routine phases of a skydive**, particularly **during climb-out and exit**, where proximity to aircraft structures presents the potential for a premature deployment.

Key safety considerations for members

The incident highlights several **important reminders** for all jumpers:

1. Exit position awareness

Aircraft exits, especially float and door positions bring jumpers **very close to flaps, struts, door frames, and tail surfaces**. This is even more relevant for the short Cessna Caravan. Even familiar movements can place handles / pud's at risk if body position changes under pressure.

2. Handle / Pud security

A correct handle check **inside the aircraft** does not guarantee continued clearance during climb-out. Changes in posture, pushing forward, or rotating the torso can expose handles to snag hazards.

3. Big-way pressure and spatial awareness

Large formations often involve:

- Tight exits
- Multiple bodies moving simultaneously
- Increased pressure to "make space" for others

This can unintentionally increase snag risk, even among disciplined and experienced teams.

4. Rapid decision-making under stress

The incident demonstrated the importance of:

- **Immediate communication** inside the aircraft
- Jumpers exiting promptly when directed
- A pilot being informed quickly and decisively

Calm, decisive actions by multiple people helped prevent further incident.

5. Knife access and Emergency Procedures

The jumper's ability to **access and use a hook knife under extreme conditions** was critical. This reinforces the importance of:

- At least one serviceable hook-knife.
- Knowing the position of the hook-knife.
- Is it easily accessible?
- Regularly practising emergency procedures mentally, not just in training environments.
- It's not just a myth. There is more than one situation for the use of a hook-knife. Speak with experienced Instructors and get to know what these situations could be and how these situations could affect your Emergency Procedures.

Considerations for British Skydiving members

This incident is a reminder that **aircraft-related risks do not end at the door**. Exit discipline, spatial awareness, and respect for aircraft structures are just as critical as freefall and canopy skills.

Members are encouraged to:

- Re-evaluate exit techniques, particularly float positions & respect the maximum allowed number of skydivers in the door / past the red line
- Be mindful of handle exposure during climb-out
- Speak up during dirt dives and briefings about exit safety
- Maintain strong emergency-procedure currency, regardless of experience level
- Make sure that equipment remains well maintained
- Take the time to conduct flight-line checks with the aim to identify potential problems latter
- Pilots consider the wearing and use of Pilot Emergency Bail-Out Rigs

British Skydiving thanks the APF for sharing information in the interests of global parachuting safety and encourages members to continue fostering a **strong, learning-focused safety culture**.

15 December 2025

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Distribution

All full members



Maintaining the highest safety standards in our sport.