

SPORT PARACHUTING OPERATIONS

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This advice provides information about the manner in which sport parachuting operations are conducted. It is primarily directed to pilots whose operations take them into the vicinity of parachuting activities.

1.2 Information directed to operators of aircraft being operated in support of parachuting operations is to be found in AIP ENR 5.5 Section 2.

2. OVERVIEW OF SPORT PARACHUTING OPERATIONS

2.1 Parachuting activity occurs at many locations around Australia. Locations at which the activity occurs on a regular and frequent basis are notified by a parachute symbol on ERC, TAC and VTC charts. Because of the manner in which vertical columns of airspace are used, parachuting may present a hazard to other aircraft operations if its nature is not understood.

2.2 Parachutists may exit the drop aircraft at any height from 1,500FT AGL up to FL140. They may open their parachutes immediately on exit, or may free-fall to as low as 2,000FT AGL before opening.

2.3 Depending on wind strength and planned parachute opening height, parachutists may exit the aircraft over the target or up to three or four nautical miles upwind of it. They do not usually fly a significant distance downwind of the target except to fly a very steep circuit to land into wind.

2.4 Parachutists are not permitted to enter cloud during the course of a parachute descent. However, the normal VMC separations from cloud are not required and parachutists may descend through gaps in broken cloud.

3. NOTIFICATION

3.1 A broadcast from the drop aircraft will be made not less than two (2) minutes prior to parachutists exiting the aircraft. This broadcast is made on both relevant frequencies when the exit occurs in airspace covered by an area VHF frequency and the landing area is located in a CTAF or MBZ, or when parachutists descend from controlled airspace into underlying Class G airspace.

3.2 NOTAM are only issued in respect of parachuting activity meeting the following criteria:

- a. regular and frequent activity occurring prior to publication of a chart symbol; or
- b. major parachuting activity at locations not covered by a chart symbol.

Major activity comprises:

- (i) three or more aircraft in use simultaneously for parachuting; or
- (ii) 20 or more parachutists dropping simultaneously from aircraft of DHC-6 size or larger; or
- (iii) 100 or more individual parachute descents per day.

4. PARACHUTING OPERATIONS IN CONTROLLED AIRSPACE

4.1 Parachutists must not exit the aircraft until the pilot has received a clearance from ATC authorising the descent. This will be phrased as '[Call-sign] CLEAR TO DROP'.

4.2 Where parachute descents occur regularly in controlled airspace, they will be conducted in accordance with a letter of agreement between the operator, Air Traffic Services (ATS), CASA and other interested parties (eg, aerodrome operators). The agreement may specify times when drop clearances are available, climb procedures, special flight notification procedures and other operational matters.

4.3 Where parachutists will leave controlled airspace on descent, the pilot of the aircraft must broadcast the intention to drop at least two (2) minutes prior to exit on the relevant CTAF, area VHF or MBZ frequency. Notwithstanding that a drop clearance may have been issued, the drop must not proceed if replies to this broadcast (or visual observation) indicate that there is conflicting traffic beneath the CTA. The drop can only proceed when the conflicting traffic is clear.

4.4 In order to monitor both frequencies in cases as described at para 4.3, the parachute-dropping aircraft should be fitted with two VHF transceivers. This is a requirement where the underlying airspace is an MBZ, or where a CTAF applies.

4.5 Where two aircraft engaged in parachuting operations are operating at the same drop zone or drop zones located in close proximity, and the operators have indicated their agreement, ATC will provide traffic information

to enable the pilots to provide their own separation. If pilots then require ATC to provide a separation service, this can be provided, but pilots will remain responsible for separation until ATC separation is established and can be maintained.

5. PARACHUTE OPERATIONS IN MBZs

5.1 The target for parachutists making a descent within an MBZ must be located clear of any take-off and runway approach path for the runway in use, or likely to be in use in the prevailing conditions. It must also be outside the active portion of the circuit area as determined by the Performance Category of any aircraft operating in the circuit area at the time of the descent.

5.2 Aircraft supporting parachute descents within an MBZ must be equipped with two VHF radio transceivers, to monitor traffic within the MBZ and in the surrounding airspace. In addition to the two (2) minute prior broadcast on the MBZ frequency, the pilot must advise the intention to drop parachutists not less than four (4) minutes prior to the planned exit, on both the MBZ and surrounding area frequencies.

5.3 Parachutists must not exit the drop aircraft within 15 minutes prior to the estimated time of arrival of an RPT aircraft unless the two aircraft are in direct communication, and the exit can be completed such that all parachutists are on the ground prior to the arrival of the RPT aircraft in the circling area. Once the RPT aircraft has landed and taxied clear of the runway, the exit may proceed if there is no other conflicting traffic.

5.4 When a departing RPT aircraft has broadcast taxiing for departure, parachutists must not commence a descent until the RPT aircraft is clear of the circuit area.

6. PARACHUTE DESCENTS AT LICENSED AERODROMES

6.1 Parachutists must not be dropped onto a licensed aerodrome without the approval of the relevant District Office of CASA unless:

- a. the aerodrome operator has approved parachute descents onto the aerodrome, and other regular or locally-based users of the aerodrome airspace have been advised of the intended parachuting operations; and
 - b. the target for parachutists is located clear of movement areas by the distance prescribed as the minimum drop zone radius for the qualifications of the parachutists using it.
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6.2 During the course of a parachute descent, parachutists must not conflict with any known traffic:

- a. in the live side of any circuit known to be in use, or reasonably expected to be used by known traffic in the prevailing conditions; or
- b. using any runway, taxiway or apron.

6.3 A parachute descent must not commence if another aircraft is conducting an instrument approach procedure, or is expected to commence an instrument approach procedure in the next five (5) minutes after the planned drop.

END
