



Allen Silver

Ask Allen

A master rigger answers your questions about parachutes.

By Allen Silver, IAC 431160

Q: How do I hook my personal locator beacon or my survival kit to my parachute?

A: In the past few months I've seen a disturbing trend; people are attaching their SPOT locator beacons or the survival/locator beacon kit that I manufacture to their harnesses in the wrong areas. Never attach anything to your harness without consulting your parachute rigger.

If an emergency arose and required the use of your parachute, this could very easily lead to a malfunction during deployment. Don't make a bad day worse by attaching your locator beacon to an area of your harness that could prevent your parachute from deploying properly. You should *never* attach anything in the shoulder area. The risers (see photo 1) must not be restricted from fully deploying. Photo 1 shows the riser (the webbing that holds the suspension lines of your parachute) and a kit attached incorrectly over the riser and the riser cover (see photo 2). Hopefully, it would break free during deployment and the riser cover would be able to open, releasing the riser and allowing your chute to fully deploy. Of course, if it does break the plastic ties, you've lost your survival kit/locator beacon, but at least you're alive. I'm fairly certain that in this scenario the riser would not be able to spread apart properly as shown in photo 1. This would more than likely put the parachute (and you) into an unrecoverable spin that could cause serious injury or worse.

The next example shows a SPOT Satellite Personal Tracker (see photo 3) that came into my shop attached directly to the riser cover that runs over the top of your shoulder. The area it covered (see photo 4 where I'm pointing) must be able to spread apart like in photo 1. This was another potential accident waiting to happen. Each of you can help. If you see anyone with locator beacons, survival kits, rifles, or the kitchen sink attached in the shoulder area of his or her parachute, explain the dangers and tell that person to contact his or her parachute rigger. Don't use the chute until it's been checked.

The use of personal locator beacons or my SMAK Pak survival kit (with or without a locator beacon inside) can add to your safety, but you *must* have them installed properly. Don't get creative here and think you're saving a buck by installing it yourself. Most parachute riggers will probably assist you for free. After all, we want to collect our bottle of spirits for a job well done if you ever have to use your parachute in an emergency. To collect that bottle you first must survive. 🍷

