



AUSTRALIAN PARACHUTE FEDERATION

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Preliminary Investigation Report

APF IN Ref No. 21751 & 21752 - Incident 15 July 2017

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| Date & time of Incident: 15/07/17, 1.20 pm AEST | Harness/Container: Strong TNT |
| Drop Zone Location: Picton, NSW | Main: Icarus 330 Tandem |
| Tandem Instructor: Sex: Male Age: 63 Tandem Student: Sex: Male Age: 29 | Reserve: Patronus 366 |
| Jump No: Tandem Instructor: 9733 Tandem Student: 1 | Tandem student harness: UPT Sigma |
| Body Weight: Tandem Instructor: ~86kg Tandem Student: ~68kg | Main Deployment Type: BOC |
| Time in Sport (TI): 31 years | AAD: CYPRES Tandem |
| Certificate Class (TI): F | RSL fitted Yes, MARD fitted |
| Jump Type: Tandem | Altimeter: Digital, Alti-2 N3 Audible altimeters: Pro Track and Alti-2 Neptune |
| Aircraft: Cessna 208 Super Caravan (Texas Turbine) with straddle bench seating. | Camera: Handcam in use, GoPro |
| Weather: Conditions fine and sunny, 0 Okta cloud, wind 3-5kts South West | Helmet: Cookie open face camera helmet |
| Injuries Sustained: Fatal | Jumpsuit: Tandem Instructor and student: Tandem pants. |
| Report Status: Preliminary – Investigation continuing. | |

This Preliminary Investigation Report (Report) is a preliminary report regarding the incident that occurred on 15 July 2017. It has been prepared based on information available to APF up to 3:00pm on 21 July 2017. This Report is provided in the interests of accident prevention and is intended to facilitate safety studies within appropriate organisations. Accordingly, it has been issued swiftly for the benefit of, and in the interests of, safety. APF's investigation remains ongoing and the information, findings or conclusions contained in this Report may change as further information becomes available and further analysis conducted. On that basis, this Report is subject to change as our investigations continue, as these further and ongoing investigations may reveal other relevant information. This Report may be updated where new information becomes available.

Background

The deceased Tandem Instructor (TI-a) was an experienced and current instructor, with 31 years experience of skydiving and being a TI for 21 years. He held multiple ratings, including Instructor B, Tandem endorsements in Strong (since May 1996) and Vector/Sigma, and AFF. He had done a total of approximately 2000+ tandems, of which approximately 260 were done over the last year and 39 over the last month. During this period, he also had made numerous jumps on his sports gear, including fun jumps, RW, camera and AFF.

It was the deceased Tandem Student's first jump.

The Jump

It was the Tandem Instructor (TI-a's) fifth jump and fourth tandem of the day. Exit was planned from approximately 14,000ft. There were two tandems on the load, and the TI-a pair were planned to exit the aircraft first of the tandems, after a 10-way with camera, and one AFF instructor (AFF-I) with student.

The TI-a misplaced his Handcam camera glove (with camera) after he got seated in the aircraft and could not locate it. After take-off, he asked another jumper to help him look for it. Above 1000ft, after the Single Point Restraints (SPR) were released, he stood up from the bench bending forward in an attempt to find it. The other jumper located the camera on the bench in between the TI-a and his student.

On the way to altitude (approximately between 4000 and 6000ft) the other Tandem Instructor (TI-b) on the load noticed that the TI-a's left drogue release was about 2 inches lower than where it was supposed to be and mentioned this to the TI-a. The TI-a then said to TI-b that he had a problem with his drogue as well.

The TI-a requested the AFF-I (also Tandem rated) to assist him with re-positioning the drogue release handle. He turned towards AFF-I, who re-positioned the handle and made sure the cables at the back were correctly positioned through the closing loops.

On jump run, after the 3-minute light, the TI-a requested the AFF-I to switch on TI-a's Handcam camera (located on his left hand) which he did. AFF-I's video footage shows TI-a's drogue out and to the right of TI-a's body at this point. After all other jumpers left the aircraft at ~14,000ft and only the two tandem pairs remained, TI-a gestured to TI-b to exit first, which he did.

Just before TI-b exited the aircraft, he noticed that the still seated TI-a had his drogue in his right hand. Video footage from TI-b's (Handcam) show the TI-a's drogue located on his right, completely out of the pouch. The drogue appears to be held in the TI-a's right hand, forward and high.

The TI-a then requested the pilot to do a go-around. With a remaining short 2-minute airspace window, the go-around lasted about 1 and a half minutes. The pilot gave the green light for exit and noticed that the TI-a exited the aircraft quickly.

The tandem pair (TI-a) was observed by the GCA in droguefall after exit. He then focused his attention on other parachutes from the load in the air and landing, after which he could neither see nor locate the TI-a tandem parachute, so alerted the DZSO/CI. A search was initiated employing three aircraft and one ground vehicle. The tandem pair was located on a property 1.5km from the DZ, with emergency services already in attendance. Both the Tandem Instructor and Tandem Student were found deceased after impacting with the ground at a speed close to terminal velocity.

Preliminary Equipment Inspection

Inspection of the equipment on the incident site and the day after showed the following:

- The student was attached to his instructor by the two bottom and top left snaps. The top right snap was not attached to the TI's harness.
- The drogue bridle was snagged in the top right snap of the student harness, with the snap fully closed around it and the bridle securely lodged at a point approximately one metre from the main deployment bag.
- Both drogue releases missing (pulled?) and main container open.
- Cut-away handle in place.
- Reserve handle out of its pouch, but handle not pulled.
- RSL disconnected.
- AAD activated.
- Reserve container open.
- Main parachute still in deployment bag with a number of stows still in place.
- Reserve parachute still in deployment bag with a number of stows still in place.
- Drogue bridle and reserve bridle severely twisted up and "tourniquet-ed", up to the point where the reserve bridle is attached to the reserve deployment bag. Some parachute lines also entangled with this.
- It appears that the entanglement prevented both deployment bags from extending much more than 1.2 metres above the tandem pair.
- About 4 metres of reserve bridle extending up to the reserve pilot chute above the entanglement.
- No indication that either main or reserve parachute would not have deployed under normal circumstances.
- Strong TNT system just over 1 year old and all service and maintenance records appear to be in order.

Preliminary investigation of the tandem equipment indicates it was serviceable before emplaning.

The TI-a's own camera footage was severely damaged and has not yet been available for analysis.

Final Report

This is a complex investigation and is being fully investigated by the NSW Police and the APF. A final report will be produced for the NSW Coroner in due course.

21st July 2017