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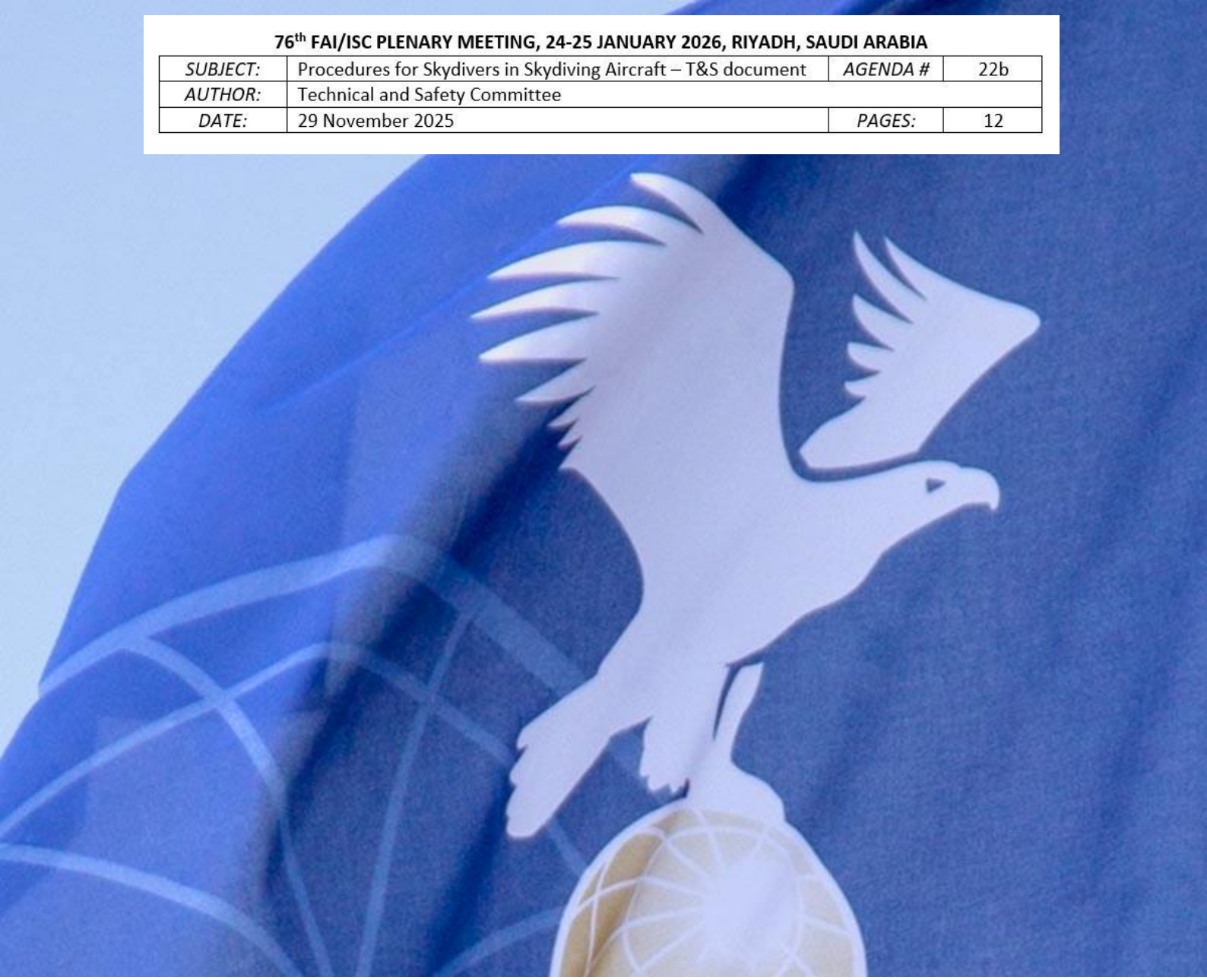

PROCEDURES FOR SKYDIVERS IN SKYDIVING AIRCRAFT

2026 Edition

Effective 1st March 2026

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Revisions

VERSION	AMENDMENTS
Ver. 1.0 2025-06-01	Revisions table added. (list of reference No's changed)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This document, the Procedures for Skydivers in Skydiving Aircraft, 2026 Edition, takes effect on the 1st March 2026. The 2026 Edition differs from the 2025 Edition in those paragraphs with a vertical bar in the margin.

1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT

The purpose of the document is to serve as guideline and recommendations to be followed by all skydivers on any type of aircraft used in skydiving activities. The recommendations must be adhered to during all skydiving jumps, whether it is competition, training or leisure activities. The type of Jump or the parachuting discipline is irrelavant.to these recommendations.

2 DEFINITIONS OF WORDS AND PHRASES

2.1 AAD

An AAD is an Automatic Activation Device, fitted to the reserve parachute. It is designed to cut the reserve closing loop when certain parameters are met – altitude and descent speed. The AAD does not arm itself until it has reached a certain altitude on ascent, so it may not 'fire' in the event of a very low exit. Manual operation of the reserve is therefore necessary, and as good practice should always be the chosen method of reserve deployment.

2.2 RESTRAINTS

Restraints for Skydivers in Skydiving Aircraft are usually of the 'single-point' type. They are intended to prevent weight-shift forward in the event of the aircraft stopping suddenly or becoming unstable. They may not prevent the individual wearer from being tossed about in the event of an accident.

Restraints must be of an approved type, approved by the aircraft manufacturer and the national civil aviation authority.

2.3 STATIC LINE

A Static Line is a line which is designed to open a parachute rig/pack and extract the main deployment bag holding the main canopy, or to extract a pilot chute.

The Static Line deployment system is sometimes used for Students in the early stages of their progression, before they advance to freefall. The Static Line length is critical, and is determined by the type of aircraft being used to despatch the Static Line Students. The Static Line must never be so long as to be capable of striking the tail of the aircraft, so it must be short of the distance between the trailing edge of the exit door and the horizontal stabilizer, to avoid a tail strike

3 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

General issues relating to Piloting of Skydiving Aircraft and Checkout of Skydivers. All skydivers must be made familiar with any specific issues attached to the use of the aircraft from which they are skydiving.

This is the responsibility of the aircraft operator and the Loadmaster/Jumpmaster/Instructor.

3.1 CIRCUIT FLOWN

The circuit flown should be considerate of the needs of the skydivers to have a safe place to land in the event of an aircraft problem and the need to exit the aircraft – e.g. the avoidance, if possible, of climb over a large body of water or mountainous terrain.

3.2 WHO IS IN COMMAND?

The Pilot is the person in command of an aircraft and his commands should be followed. If the pilot is unable to communicate with the Loadmaster/Jumpmaster, then the Loadmaster/Jumpmaster may have to take control of the situation and make every effort to despatch the skydivers safely.

In this respect the Jumpmaster/Loadmaster must fully understand his responsibilities towards the skydivers on board, especially towards those on Student status.

3.3 SHOULD THE PILOT WEAR A PARACHUTE?

3.3.1 This is a matter to be decided by the Aircraft Owner and the Aircraft Operator, in conjunction with the Pilot.

3.3.2 The type of aircraft flown may be a deciding factor in this issue.

It may be a wiser option for the Pilot to wear a parachute, other than with an aircraft where there is danger for a Pilot to exit with a parachute. In the event of catastrophic aircraft failure, the Pilot may have no chance of survival without a parachute.

3.3.3 The Pilot, if wearing a parachute, must have been trained in the deployment and flying of that parachute.

3.4 CHECKOUT OF SKYDIVERS

Skydivers can themselves be the cause of serious aircraft problems.

To help avoid this, skydivers must,

3.4.1 Have a thorough gear-check before emplaning, with special attention paid to closing loops and pins. If a loop is too long, frayed or worn, the skydiver must have it replaced immediately and must not be allowed onto an aircraft until replacement has been carried out.

3.4.2 Be aware that sitting may dislodge the main pin. Sitting with one's back to any surface may dislodge the reserve pin.

4 CONDUCT OF SKYDIVERS IN THE AIRCRAFT AND ON EXIT

4.1 PILOT DECISION REGARDING WEIGHT

The Pilot is the person in command of the aircraft, and if he is unhappy about the weight of the load, then he, irrespective of what the skydivers may think, is perfectly entitled to remove a person or persons form the aircraft, to reduce weight.

4.2 LOUD CONVERSATION IN THE AIRCRAFT

While on board conversation should be kept to a minimum, with no shouting. Shouting is a serious distraction for the Pilot. If the skydivers have been properly briefed before emplaning there will not be any need for confusing and distracting loud conversation.

4.3 MOVEMENT IN THE AIRCRAFT

Weight shift, which will displace the centre of gravity and may cause difficulties for the Pilot, must be avoided. The use of restraints may of course limit movement, but the general rule is that the skydivers must, until exit, stay specifically in the positions in which they have been boarded.

4.4 WEIGHT AND BALANCE CENTRE OF GRAVITY/LOAD SHIFT.

Some aircraft will have a prominent line on the floor of the cabin, and there will be an instruction, which must be known by all skydivers who use the aircraft, that only a specific number of skydivers may be aft of this line. This number will include those already 'in the door' and about to exit. The line shows that excess weight must not be aft, as the aircraft will lose stability and may go into a stall.

5 ENGINE FAILURE ON TAKE OFF

5.1 RESTRAINTS

Skydivers should use restraints of an approved type, which should be secured to the skydiver's harness, immediately upon emplaning, These restraints are to prevent movement, and the crushing of the people in the front of the aircraft, in the event of a sudden stop/crash.

5.2 HELMETS

Helmets should be worn and firmly secured.

5.3 LOOSE OBJECTS

There should not be any loose objects in the aircraft, as they could fly about and cause injury.

5.4 LOW ALTITUDE

Where there is engine failure or other aircraft issues on takeoff the altitude is too low to leave the aircraft.

5.5 SKYDIVERS SITTING POSITION

Skydivers should, if at all possible, be seated with their backs in the direction of travel, as this is the best position in the event of a crash. The human neck flexes more easily back to front, than from side to side.

5.6 HELPING OTHERS

When the aircraft comes to a halt the skydivers should immediately exit and if it is safe to do so, a person may return to help anyone who may be injured.

5.7 DANGER OF FIRE

Anyone returning to a crashed aircraft should be very aware of the possibility of a fire.

5.8 HOOK KNIFE

A hook-knife may be useful to cut restraints or Static Lines and free other skydivers.

6 AIRCRAFT PROBLEM UP TO 300 M (1000 FT)

6.1 RESTRAINTS

It is likely that restraints will still be attached, and below 1,000 ft. the only option may be to stay with the aircraft and prepare for a hard landing. Restraints should be opened at 300m (1,000 ft),which is the normal practice in many drop zones.

6.2 CATASTROPHIC FAILURE

If there is a fire or some catastrophic aircraft failure then the better option may be to exit and deploy the reserve immediately.

6.3 SKYDIVER'S CHOICE

For some, this may be deemed too low an altitude to exit, but that decision may rest with the skydiver, especially if near the door and in a position to exit. If a skydiver opts to exit from this low altitude the reserve should be used, immediately on leaving the aircraft.

6.4 STATIC LINE DISPATCH

The Loadmaster/Jumpmaster may decide to despatch Static Line students from this altitude. This is a judgement call on the LM/JM's part, but the LM/JM must be aware of the terrain below, and whether it is higher, and to what degree, than the take-off altitude.

6.5 AAD ARMING

At this low altitude the AAD may not be armed, so it cannot be relied on to fire. Immediate manual pulling of the Reserve handle is necessary.

7 AIRCRAFT PROBLEM BETWEEN 300 M (1000FT) AND 600 M (2000 FT)

7.1 FAST EXIT AND RESERVE DEPLOYMENT

If possible the skydivers should exit and deploy their reserves. Delay in exiting may result in loss of aircraft altitude, with the result that others may not be able to exit.

7.2 AAD ARMING HEIGHT

If the height at which an AAD arms is not reached the AAD will not operate. See also 6.5 above regarding this matter.

7.3 PARACHUTE OPEN IN THE AIRCRAFT

7.3.1 If either the main container opens, or the reserve pilot 'chute extracts, the aircraft door must remain closed, the Pilot informed of the problem and the aircraft descend without any skydivers being despatched.

7.3.2 It is important to note that if a pilot 'chute escapes out the door, there is the possibility that a parachute may deploy. This may;

7.3.2.1 Cause damage to the aircraft (and the skydiver)

7.3.2.2 Prevent the aircraft flying properly, due to the increased drag of a deployed parachute (where the skydiver is unable to cut away that parachute).

7.3.2.3 If a pilot 'chute does escape out the door then, if possible, the skydiver must follow immediately, without any hesitation

7.3.3 General Guideline - if an aircraft problem warrants an exit, then if that happens below the normal opening height of the skydiver, the skydiver should deploy the reserve. Obove the normal opening height the main can be deployed, as in a normal skydive. But be aware that the landing area may be off the drop zone, so an early choosing of a safe landing area should be made.

8 AIRCRAFT PROBLEM ABOVE 600 M (2000 FT)

8.3 PILOT DECISION REGARDING EXIT

With a twin-engine aircraft the Pilot will decide whether he wishes jumpers to exit, to lighten the load.

8.4 PILOT INSTRUCTIONS TO JUMP/LOADMASTER

With a single-engine aircraft the Pilot will relay instructions to the Loadmaster as to what he, the Pilot, wishes to be done.

8.5 CANOPY DEPLOYMENT

In the event of skydivers having to exit, obviously the more height there is the better, but above 600 m (2,000 ft) the main parachute may be used.

8.6 CANOPY CHECKS

The normal checks, on opening, should be performed.

8.7 OTHER SKYDIVERS IN THE AIR

Be aware that there may be others close by (avoid collision under canopy) and immediately choose a safe landing area.

8.8 OFF DROP ZONE LANDINGS

Off drop zone landings are potentially hazardous, as there may be unseen obstacles and the territory may be unfamiliar. Watch out for power lines, which are usually difficult to see from above, but if poles or pylons can be seen it is certain that there will be power lines between these.

8.9 PREMATURE DEPLOYMENT IN DOOR ON EXIT

This can happen at any altitude, in any instance where a skydiver is leaving the aircraft. It is potentially very dangerous, as the deploying main or reserve may entangle with the aircraft. This is an especial danger if the horizontal stabiliser is low, and/or the exit door is close to the tail, perhaps with the added danger of the aircraft being nose high/tail low, instead of in level flight.

8.10 AIRCRAFT STALL

8.10.1 The Pilot is the only person who can, of possible, retrieve the situation.

8.10.2 At a low altitude there may be little that can be done to recover from the stall.

8.10.3 At a high altitude the Pilot may be able to recover, but anyone who possibly can (bearing in mind the forces which come into play in an out-of-control aircarft), should exit.

8.11 STUDENT STAIC LINE HANG-UP

8.11.1 It may, or quite likely may not, be possible to bring the Student back into the aircraft. An older procedure, prior to the advent of the AAD, was for the Jumpmaster to climb down the Static Line, using a carabineer, cut the snagged Static Line, fall fee, deploy the Student's reserve and then deploy his own (JM's) parachute. With the advent of AAD this has become somewhat redundant, the practice now being to cut the Static Line with a hook knife.

8.11.2 In this case there cannot be certainty that the Student will deploy the reserve, so the AAD is being relied upon to open the parachute of the Student.

8.11.3 Some matters to be considered are;

8.11.3.1 a) Is the Student conscious or not?

8.11.3.2 b) Is it absolutely positive that the AAD is switched on?

There should have been a gear check, which includes checking the AAD, before emplaning, and there should be a further gear check, including checking that the AAD is on, on run-in for the Student.

8.11.4 If you cut the Static Line of a Student you cannot be certain that he will act correctly; if he is not fully conscious and the AAD is relied on to open the reserve parachute.

9 CATASTROPHIC AIRCRAFT FAILURE

9.3 GENERAL

This presents a very serious scenario, quite different from an engine failure. The aircraft may be totally out of control, despite the best efforts of the Pilot. All aboard, including the Pilot, will have no option but to leave the stricken aircraft. Pilots may therefore, depending on the type of aircraft, choose to wear a parachute.

9.4 IMMEDIATE EXIT

It is important that skydivers exit immediately the problem is known, as delay may result in more difficulty in leaving the stricken aircraft – see 9.5 below.

9.5 CONTROLLED EXITS, WHEN POSSIBLE.

The Jumpmaster/Loadmaster shall, if possible, open the jump door,and if time and the situation permit, control the exit of the skydivers.

9.6 EXIT ORDER

Lesser experienced skydivers should exit first, with the more experienced jumpers following. In practice however, it is best that those who can get out do so, in whatever order.

9.7 CENTRIFUGAL FORCES

The centrifugal forces of an out-of-control aircraft may cause extreme difficulty for skydivers to exit.

9.8 OPENING OF PARACHUTES

The skydivers may decide to freefall to normal opening altitude, depending on their options of a landing area, or may open higher to ensure they can reach a safe area for landing.

10 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

10.3 EXIT DOOR JAMMED

The exit door is jammed with an inability to open it. In the event of structural failure this can happen.

It is a most serious situation if the skydivers are trapped and cannot get out.

10.4 USE OF PILOT'S DOOR TO EXIT.

In some aircaft there may be the possibility that skydivers may be able to exit via the Pilot's door – not always easy – but if the Pilot is not wearing a rig and is blocking the door then the skydivers may have little chance of survival.

11 CONSIDERATION ON TANDEM JUMPS

A common minimum exit for Tandems is 1,400m (4,500 ft) A Tandem Master may opt to exit at a lower altitude depending upon the circumstances, but in the cases of 5, 6 and 7 above, there is possibly no option but to stay with the stricken aircraft. Solo skydivers should allow space for the Tandem when there is a Tandem in the air and when coming into a landing area.

12 PASSANGERS (NON SKYDIVERS) ABOARD SKYDIVING AIRCRAFT

12.3 GENERAL AND REGULATIONS

Whether or not passengers (people who do not intend to skydive) are allowed to fly on a load where skydivers will exit the aircraft may depend upon national regulations. In some countries it is forbidden to carry non-jumpers. An exception may be an Instructor Despatching Students, with the Instructor himself/herself not intending to jump. However, in these cases the Instructor must wear a parachute, in case he/she must exit. Some jurisdictions may not have regulations prohibiting the carrying of non-jumpers on skydiving aircraft. Operators should be familiar with the law and regulations in their jurisdictions. They should also be aware that there may be liability issues in carrying non-jumpers, who have a lesser chance of dealing with an aircraft emergency than a skydiver.

12.4 CONSIDERATIONS

Even if the carrying of non-jumpers is allowed there are other factors to consider;

12.2.1 Will the non-jumper be fitted with a parachute, and of so, will he/she be capable of deploying the parachute and landing it safely?

12.2.2 Parachutes are not designed for children. The carriage of children is a serious matter, as in the event of an aircraft problem the child may not (depending on the person's age) be able to exit and use a parachute.

12.2.3 In the case of catastrophic aircraft failure, a non-jumper without a parachute has little chance of survival.

13 SUMMARY

These suggested procedures are not definitive, as circumstances will vary with many factors, such as the altitude at which the aircraft develops a problem, the type of aircraft and the type of terrain over which the disabled aircraft happens to be.

Circumstances may require a judgement call, and the Pilot, Loadmaster/Jumpmaster, Instructor, Tandem Instructor/Master or individual Skydiver may have to make an instant decision as to what to do.

There may not be a 'right' or 'wrong' thing to do – a judgement call is just that.

FAI - Fédération Aéronautique Internationale
Avenue de Rhodanie 54
CH-1007 Lausanne
Switzerland
Tel: +41 21 345 10 70
Fax: +41 21 345 10 77
www.fai.org
info@fai.org