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5401 SOUTHPOINT CENTRE BLVD., FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA  
PHONE: (540) 604-9740 • FAX: (540) 604-9741 • WWW.USPA.ORG

September 11, 2009

Dear DZO:

As we've been reporting since last fall, USPA has been working on a program to address concerns that arose out of last year's NTSB public hearing on their Special Investigation Report on the Safety of Parachute Jump Operations. (You can review the full report on USPA's web site at <http://www.uspa.org/Portals/0/files/SIR0801.pdf>) USPA took issue with some aspects of the report—such as the fact that it reached back some 28 years to catalog jump plane accidents involving radial engine, non-seatbelt-equipped aircraft. But the hard reality is that even recent accidents revealed continuing maintenance issues and deficient pilots. No surprise then, that the resulting NTSB recommendations to both USPA and the FAA were pretty dramatic. One recommendation implores the FAA to impose airline-style aircraft inspections including mandatory compliance with service bulletins and times between overhaul (TBO).

USPA quickly determined that real and substantive action on our part was justified. The good news is that the FAA has agreed to our program, and the agency will be watching to see how well it works. At its summer meeting, the USPA board approved a two-pronged approach. The first effort is to review the FARs with respect to jump operations, to clarify what is expected. The second effort is to implement a method to validate a DZ's actions to meet the regulations.

Attached is a paper developed by USPA staff in consultation with multiple experts, including FAA headquarters and field offices, repair stations, jump plane fleet operators, and others. The paper outlines a reasoned, vetted USPA position on multiple issues related to jump plane operations, along with excerpted FARs as background. We invite you to read the paper, and even to reread the FARs, but here are the highlights:

- All DZs (whether a club, school, or business) offering jump flights to the public (whether first-jump customers or skydivers), are engaged in “for hire” operations under Part 91.
- As a for-hire operation, a DZ must use pilots holding at least a commercial pilot certificate with at least a current 2<sup>nd</sup>-class medical certificate.
- As a for-hire operation, a DZ must comply with the inspection requirements specified in either FAR 91.409(a) and (b), or (d), or (f)(3), or (f)(4). No jump aircraft is eligible for an annual inspection alone.

To ensure that these points are clear and understood, you will see statements similar to those above on the Group Member pledge that each DZ signs. To assist DZs in validating the aircraft inspection requirements, the Group Member initial and renewal application will also solicit your completion and return of an Aircraft Status Form (also attached) for each aircraft. Each form will be checked for completion to ensure that each aircraft is under an appropriate inspection program; the form will then be discarded.

This MUST work, and here's why. While the NTSB can only recommend safety changes, it has a long memory. And if an industry fails to react to NTSB recommendations and accidents continue, the NTSB has shown an ability to focus more media attention on that industry with additional public hearings and testimony before Congress. We only have to look at the helicopter EMS industry as an example. That industry and the FAA were slow to react to initial NTSB recommendations arising out of an increased number of EMS helicopter crashes. In response, the NTSB leveraged more Congressional attention and the media focus that continues today.

Skydiving operators have an opportunity to shape skydiving's future by participating in a workable, educational, non-burdensome process to make sure all operators are in compliance with pilot and aircraft inspection regulatory requirements. Let's make this work; the alternative would be too difficult to predict or contemplate.

Next, USPA begins work on the NTSB recommendations calling for improved jump pilot initial and recurrent testing and training programs. As before, we'll keep you advised along the way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ed Scott  
Executive Director