

Reserve Parachutes Untangled!

Fashions within the reserve market have fluctuated over the years; things like very small systems, enormous chutes, or steerable models have been the fad at some time.

Nowadays the vast majority of pilots choose a pulled apex round reserve, these are fast opening, simple to use and pack and have a suitable descent rate. In nearly every 'real-life' deployment the main priority is fast-opening. There are many external factors such as turbulence, your main wing and being tangled up with someone else, that can affect sink-rate, but speedy opening is a requirement in EVERY situation. For this reason, do not blindly buy the biggest reserve you can find. They need to be loaded to work properly and the larger the area, the slower the opening time. Any certified system will work, and should save your neck if it is the right size for you and properly packed. However there are a few variables you may wish to consider when making that new purchase. The most important is track record. When you are plummeting earthward under a damaged wing it is no time to be trying out something unproven! A quoted descent rate of around 5.5m/sec is the equivalent of you jumping off a 6ft wall. — ie you will definitely survive and will probably walk away but there is high risk of you injuring an ankle or similar. (A good PLF is a very useful skill in this situation). A descent rate of 4.2m/sec is much more comfortable and you should not even fall over if you are reasonably fit and land on a good surface. All our systems are fully certified and proven, the Apco Mayday is by a considerable margin the best selling system worldwide and it has saved at least 300 pilots over the years, with not one single incident of failure or malfunction. Maydays have survived anything from terminal velocity opening to two pilots coming down tangled up under one reserve! A couple of pilots have had their lives saved more than once by their maydays! For those with a skydiving background or a specific interest, the mayday features refinements such as 4 line seams at the edge of the skirt and V tabs at line connection points. We also sell the Sup-air lightweight system. This is a very similar design but with a slightly asymmetric cut that aids stability when descending (all reserves tend to swing about because of the effect of the main canopy.) A good choice for the weight-conscious pilot. The Gin One-G and the U-Turn Protect system are the same type of reserve (with slightly differing deployment bags) and are geared very much to the pilot looking for lower descent rate. They are a little larger and bulkier but are well suited to pilots who want the added security of a slower descent rate. The U-Turn reserve offers the best of both worlds. It has a Rapid Inflation System (RIS) and also offers an excellent sink rate; the only downside is that it among the heavier systems. Having a reserve is useless if you do not have it repacked each season and especially if you do not use it when you need it! Every year pilots crash when they had good reserves on board. Remember where it is, mentally rehearse throwing it, and do not be afraid to sling it even at low altitudes if the situation is bad. It might be the best purchase you ever make!