

Air Traffic Bulletins

December 1995

Parachute Jumping

*/*TEF/* Portions of this article have been used with the permission of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Ames Research Center, which has been involved in data collection of parachute jumping incidents through the Aviation Safety Reporting System. We gratefully acknowledge its efforts in increasing the aviation community's awareness of this subject.

As spring approaches and temperatures moderate we can count on the annual increase of parachute jumping activities. We would like to take this time to remind facilities and controllers of their responsibilities when it comes to parachute jumping operations.

Order 7110.65, Chapter 9, Parachute Jumping, details the specific responsibilities of controllers, and we encourage you to review this section. Experience has shown that most of the questions concerning a controller's responsibility for parachute jumping activities relate to Class E airspace. Coincidentally, most parachute jumping activity occurs in Class E airspace, and that is where we would like to address these operations.

Class E airspace is that airspace which "flows" around and over Classes B, C, D, and G airspace and has a ceiling of 18,000 feet MSL. Because most jump activities take place in Class E airspace, the majority of problems occurring with these operations are taking place there. Several additional clarifications on Air Traffic Control responsibilities in Class E airspace are important.

Controllers are not authorized to impose restrictions (for example, to deny or approve a jump) on parachute operations in Class E airspace, as they are authorized to do in Class A, B, C, or D airspace.

Controllers are required to give traffic advisories to jump aircraft before the jump, and to issue advisories to all known aircraft that will transit the Class E airspace within which the jump operations will occur. When time or the number of aircraft make individual transmissions impractical, advisories to nonparticipating aircraft may be broadcast on appropriate frequencies.

The point of these clarifications is to emphasize the special need in Class E airspace jump operations for both pilots and controllers to plan ahead, communicate clearly, and utilize extra vigilance in areas where jump zones are close to airways or approach corridors.

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Parachute Operations

*/*TERF/* It has come to our attention that there may be some confusion among controllers regarding the regulations and procedures for the conduct of parachute operations. In 2001, title 14, Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR), part 105, was amended and may be the cause of some of the confusion. Therefore, we would like to provide the following information and remind controllers of their responsibilities to aircraft conducting parachute operations.

Regulations addressing parachute operations are contained in, 14 CFR, part 105. Additional procedures and guidance can be found in Federal Aviation Administration Order (FAAO) 7110.65, Air Traffic Control, chapter 9, and FAAO 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration, chapter 18.

1. Why is a letter of notification received by air traffic facilities on a yearly basis from local parachute operators?

In accordance with 14 CFR, section 105.25(a)(3), prior to conducting parachute operations within Class E or Class G airspace, persons must notify the air traffic control (ATC) facility having jurisdiction over the airspace at the first intended exit altitude. Notice may be provided via telephone and must be given no earlier than 24 hours before and no later than 1 hour before the parachute operation begins. However, 14 CFR, section 105.25(c), provides for air traffic facilities to accept written notification from skydiving centers and clubs on an ongoing basis, over a stated period of time, not to exceed 12 calendar months. Written notification of parachute jump operations is not required within Class E and Class G airspace areas. However, in areas where jumps take place on a regular basis, a letter that contains information about the parachute operations is helpful and is preferred over a phone call. Please note that this is not a change from the prior rule. However, more facilities have received letters recently as the United States Parachute Association has encouraged its members to write. Providing air traffic facilities with information regarding the drop zones, dates, times of jumps, aircraft registration number, and pilot names helps reduce phone calls and frequency congestion and contributes to the safety of aircraft operating when parachute operations are being conducted.

2. In Class A, B, C and D airspace areas, what authorization do parachute operators need and who issues the authorization?

In accordance with 14 CFR, section 105.25(a)(1) and (2), no person may conduct a parachute operation and no pilot in command of an aircraft may allow a parachute operation to be conducted from that aircraft unless an air traffic control authorization has been issued. The parachute operator must provide the information specified in 14 CFR, section 105.15(a), that includes drop zone location, times of jumps, aircraft registration number, name and address of pilot, and intended exit altitude. The ATC facility (terminal or en route center) having jurisdiction over the airspace containing the first intended exit altitude is responsible for issuing the authorization. In most cases, since parachute operations descend through numerous altitudes, as well as air traffic facility boundaries and sectors, it is incumbent on the ATC facility that issues the

authorization to coordinate with other facilities that may be impacted by this operation.

3. How has the role of flight service stations (FSS) changed since 14 CFR, part 105, was amended?

The FSS's vital role of providing weather briefings and issuing Notices to Airmen of parachute operations remains current. Prior to the automation of FSSs, most FSS facilities were located at airports and had an active role in providing airport advisories. Previously, 14 CFR, part 105, contained a provision that required parachute operators to contact the nearest ATC facility or FSS at least 5 minutes prior to the jump for the sole purpose of obtaining traffic advisories. Since most FSSs are no longer located at airports, the rule has been amended. 14 CFR, section 105.13(a)(1)(ii), now states that communications must be established between the jump aircraft and the ATC facility having jurisdiction over the affected airspace of the intended exit altitude. In other words, the pilot of the jump aircraft will be in communication with and receive traffic advisories from the ATC facility that is responsible for and has real-time information about other air traffic in the area.

4. When is a certificate of authorization required and who issues it?

In accordance with 14 CFR, section 105.21(a), a certificate of authorization is required when conducting parachute operations over or into a congested area of a city, town, or settlement, or an open-air assembly of persons. The person conducting the parachute operation must apply to the local Flight Standards District Office for the certificate of authorization. This certificate addresses the safety aspects of the operation for persons and property on the ground and does not replace the ATC clearance or authorization needed for operations within Class A, B, C, or D airspace.

5. Are air traffic controllers required to issue traffic advisories to jump aircraft?

Yes. FAAO 7110.65, Air Traffic Control, paragraph 9-8-4, requires that controllers issue traffic advisories to the jump aircraft before the jump. Controllers must issue advisories to all known aircraft that will transit the airspace when the jump operations will be conducted.

6. Are air traffic controllers required to separate jump aircraft that operate within a Class E airspace area?

No. Traffic advisories shall be provided, but ATC is not required to separate visual flight rules aircraft within Class E airspace. However, in accordance with FAAO 7110.65, Air Traffic Control, paragraph 9-8-4, ATC may assist pilots of non-participating aircraft that request help in avoiding the jump airspace. In addition, if there is other traffic in the jump area, ATC does not authorize or deny jump operations due to traffic. The jump pilot shall be issued traffic advisories. The jump pilot and jumpers will make a decision on whether or not to allow the jumpers to leave the aircraft. 14 CFR, section 105.5, clearly places the burden on the jump pilot and parachutist by stating that no person may conduct a parachute operation and no pilot in command of an aircraft may allow a parachute operation to be conducted from an aircraft, if that operation creates a hazard to air traffic or to persons or property on the ground. (ATO-R System Ops)

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