PROPOSED WINGSUIT INSTRUCTOR RATING COURSE

Background:

The USPA Board of Directors is considering the adoption of a new wingsuit instructor rating program. After much discussion, the board decided to seek the opinions of the membership at large by adding a non-binding poll question to the board election ballot that will be disseminated in early November. The new rating system documentation outlines the details of the instructional rating hierarchy. If the proposal is eventually adopted by the board, the Basic Safety Requirements would require any USPA member making a first wingsuit flight to be trained by a USPA Wingsuit Instructor. Currently, the BSRs require wingsuit jumpers to have at least 200 skydives and a USPA license, but there is no training requirement. The results of the poll will be provided to the board at its March 2013 meeting in Daytona Beach, Florida.

Following is a point/counterpoint provided by two board members who have differing positions on the issue. Rich Winstock is a National Director and serves as the chairman of the Safety & Training Committee’s subcommittee reviewing the wingsuit instructor rating issue. Scott Smith is the Western Regional Director and serves as the chairman of the Competition Committee. These are their opinions.
In Support

Skydiving has been evolving at a record pace. Recently, Felix Baumgartner just brought our sport amazing positive coverage by pushing human limits. The skydiving community will continue to push the envelope in all disciplines because that is who we are and why we have come so far. Unfortunately, progress has not been without sacrifice, evident in the statistics and incident reports over the last 10 years. It is our obligation to recognize any unsafe trends, to ensure that new jumpers are given a path that is not only safe but has been time tested.

Gone should be the days of a wingsuiter “teaching his buddy.” Off landings, tandem flybys, general aviation issues and tail strikes are all increasing results of poor, non-standard instruction. Standardized wingsuit training is a forward-looking endeavor. Standards breed consistency, reduce risk and force those teaching wingsuiting to perform at already set standards. Standards provide a means of knowing all instructors are using the same information and not missing key elements during instructor sessions. Standardization will also ensure students are learning the same set of techniques and objectives.

Three things DZO s and USPA should be concerned with:
- Tail strikes
- General aviation impact
- Off landings

Proper training addresses each of these issues.

There is some resistance to providing instruction for advanced skydivers, yet we already do this via tandem, AFF and all other instructor programs. Requiring first-flight courses taught by rated skydivers may be considered by some as “advanced” instruction, yet most anyone who has had a first-flight course realizes that this is more similar to AFF than it is to “advanced skydiving.” I consider a skydiver with 200 jumps putting on a wingsuit for the first time a student and he/she should be treated accordingly.

Wingsuiting has recently found itself in an insurance debate as well: Should aircraft underwriters continue to insure a discipline with a high potential to damage aircraft and threaten lives? Standardized instruction will significantly mitigate the risk for tail strikes due to training methods that discourage poor exit methods and promote a positive safety culture in wingsuiting. Aircraft underwriters have made it clear that they support positive forward movement and standardized training.

The freedom of action for a wingsuiter far exceeds that of a "straight-down faller" and means that wingsuiters can wind up in unexpected places, at unexpected times, up to four minutes after the last jumper has exited. This can create problems for busy airports and busy DZs. Standardized instruction and proper flight-planning practices provide solid mechanisms to diminishing these issues.

We don’t see first-jump students dying under big canopies, but this does not indicate a need for less canopy training. Everyone agrees that the current push to standardize canopy training and the standard proficiency card is a benefit to all skydivers.

Wingsuiting is no different; breeding a safe and aware culture is important to the growth of the discipline. A standardized first-flight course taught by a properly rated instructor will provide a foundation for future jumps and decisions.

Rich Winstock
USPA National Director
In Opposition

This election you are being asked whether your dues money should be used for USPA’s bureaucracy to adopt, administer and regulate a wingsuit instructor program. There wasn’t enough support for the program to pass at the last USPA Board meeting, though the proposal’s supporters were able to get this non-binding poll on the ballot trying to get a mandate.

It seems they hope you read the materials and see what a good training program it is and vote yes. However the quality of this training program isn’t questioned. I think the board is unanimous in agreeing this is a great program. Personally I refer people to it all of the time. But the question you are being asked is not about the quality of the training program.

USPA has never in its history regulated or administered an advanced training program. But now you are being asked if USPA should get in that business by taking over training for a discipline it knows little about. On the USPA staff, there are no active wingsuit jumpers, and the only two on the board oppose this proposal.

Note that this program includes the following statement (para. A.3.b) which would require a change to the USPA Basic Safety Requirements (BSRs):

All general, non-method-specific student training may be conducted by any USPA Instructor, but method-specific training and jumps (AFF, IAD, static line, wingsuit and tandem) require the instructor to hold that method-specific rating.

Just like you were asked in the standardized tests you took in school, can you tell what doesn’t belong in this group?

This isn’t an argument about more regulation vs. less. The board implemented a BSR requiring 200 jumps before flying a wingsuit, and since then there hasn’t been a beginner wingsuit fatality. Smart regulations work.

A big selling point for USPA taking over wingsuit instruction is the occurrence of tail strikes by advanced wingsuit pilots jumping large wings. Some call this the new hook turn. A better way to address this real concern would be to make a BSR prohibiting inflation of a wingsuit in proximity to the airplane.

This approach targets all wingsuit jumpers, especially those causing the problem. It makes everyone on the plane safer and satisfies concerns of insurers. (Contrary to rumor, the FAA hasn’t even mentioned wingsuiting to USPA—at all.) The rule would avoid over-regulation, launching the kind of educational campaign needed for drop zones to better coordinate wingsuit jumping.

Instead, the proposal you’re being asked about strictly focuses on how USPA should regulate wingsuit first-jump courses, only ONE jump, where smaller beginner suits are used and no tail strike incidents have occurred.

In the three decades that USPA has been training students on square parachutes, students have been taught in the first-jump course (FJC) not to turn low. But that instruction in the FJC hasn’t stopped skydivers with hundreds or thousands of jumps from hooking in to their deaths.

USPA regulating wingsuit instruction is not the answer. Focusing on the real problem is.

Scott Smith
USPA Western Regional Director
PROPOSED WINGSUIT INSTRUCTOR RATING COURSE
Instructors Rating Manual

A. WHAT IS A USPA WINGSUIT INSTRUCTOR?

1. The Wingsuit Instructor Rating is one of five instructional ratings USPA administers, preceded by USPA Coach and followed by USPA Instructor Examiner.

2. A USPA Wingsuit Instructor may:
   a. Exercise all privileges of the USPA Coach Rating
   b. Conduct student training and jumps according to his/her rating
      i. Teach the Wingsuit First Flight Course in accordance with USPA teaching methods and syllabus
      ii. Conduct training in the general portions of any First Jump Course
      iii. Conduct the A license quiz and check dive
      iv. Verify certain USPA License applications according to the requirements in SIM Section 3
   v. Supervise a USPA Coach in training students and making recurrency jumps with licensed skydivers

3. Supervision (BSR’s)
   a. All student training is conducted under the direction and oversight of an appropriately rated USPA Instructor (Refer to the BSR’s)
   b. All general, non-method-specific student training may be conducted by any USPA Instructor but method-specific training and jumps (AFF, IAD, Static line, wingsuit, and tandem) require the instructor to hold that method-specific rating

4. Candidates may earn the USPA Wingsuit Instructor Rating who have met all the following requirements:
   a. Reached the age of 18 years
   b. Holds or has held any USPA Instructional Rating
   c. Earned a USPA C License or the FAI Equivalent and has made at least 300 jumps
   d. Has made at least 200 wingsuit skydives
   e. Completed the USPA Wingsuit Instructor Proficiency Card (applicable portions)
   f. Satisfactorily completed a USPA Wingsuit Instructor Certification Course
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B. WINGSUIT INSTRUCTOR TRAINING BACKGROUND

1. Wingsuiting was once disallowed in the USA, and through the development and eventual acceptance and commonalities in modern design of wingsuits, instructional methods evolved to conform to standard USPA instructional practices.

C. THE NATURE OF THE COURSE

1. This course may be conducted as an initial Instructor Rating Course for USPA Coaches
2. Each candidate is required to arrive at this course with all prerequisites completed as specified on the Wingsuit Instructor Proficiency Card
3. The classroom, training, and evaluation for this course should be conducted over a minimum of three full days
4. This course may re-qualify USPA Wingsuit Instructors who have let their Wingsuit Instructional rating lapse.

D. WHO MAY CONDUCT THIS COURSE?

1. A Wingsuit Instructor Examiner who has maintained currency as follows: Conducted at least one USPA Wingsuit Instructor Rating Course within the past 12 months
2. Continues to meet all of the requirements to qualify as a Course Evaluator (listed in Section E, “How to become a USPA Wingsuit Instructor Examiner”)

E. HOW TO BECOME A USPA WINGSUIT INSTRUCTOR COURSE EXAMINER

1. A USPA Wingsuit Instructor may conduct this course if meeting all of the following requirements:
   a. Current USPA Wingsuit Instructor Rating Holder
   b. Has logged 500 WS jumps
   c. Completed 250 Wingsuit training jumps in addition to First Flight Courses
   d. Completed at least 200 actual First Flight Courses
   e. Completed at least 50 Evaluation jumps or Course Candidate practice jumps under the direct supervision of a USPA Wingsuit Instructor Examiner
   f. Successful completion of the USPA Instructor Examiner Rating Course (IERC) Administered the course under the supervision of a current, appropriately rated USPA Instructor Examiner and received that IE’s recommendation
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g. USPA D License
h. Written recommendations/endorsements from three (3) current Wingsuit Instructor/Examiners, plus BOD approval.

2. EVALUATORS
   a. The following is required for any USPA Course Evaluator:
      i. Wingsuit Evaluators must hold a USPA Wingsuit Instructor Rating and have conducted at least 100 actual student training jumps.
      ii. Attendance. Must attend the entire classroom portions of the first course at which they will evaluate
      iii. Must attend the candidate and evaluator briefing at which course they will evaluate
      iv. Are appointed by the I/E
      v. Are supervised by the I/E who is responsible for all evaluations

3. Qualifications for individuals who are to act as simulated Wingsuit students during practice and evaluation for USPA Wingsuit Instructor Rating;
   a. Minimum 300 jumps and USPA C or higher license
   b. Briefed in the presence of a USPA Wingsuit Instructor for all applicable equipment operation and Emergency Procedures

F. WHAT IS REQUIRED TO PASS THIS COURSE?

1. Candidates for the USPA Wingsuit Instructor rating will be evaluated during the course for their ability to understand, safely prepare, and manage Wingsuit training for students making their First Flight jumps
   a. Candidates for the USPA Wingsuit Instructor rating will be evaluated during the course for their ability to understand, safely prepare, and handle Wingsuit First Flight jumps using simulated students either evaluators or jumpers with at least 300 jumps who hold a USPA C or higher license.
   b. Candidates for the USPA Wingsuit Instructor Rating will be evaluated during the course for their ability to understand, safely prepare, and handle commonly used wingsuit instructional techniques and equipment during actual wingsuit jumps using as students, evaluators or jumpers with at least 300 jumps who hold a USPA C or higher license
   c. All candidates will Satisfactorily train, observe, and critique at least two wingsuit free-fall jumps taken from the Wingsuit First Flight Course performed by the I/E during the course

2. Written; prior to attending the USPA Wingsuit Instructors course, each candidate must correctly answer at least 80% of the questions on an open-book written examination covering the following:
   a. This syllabus
   b. USPA Basic Safety Requirements
   c. SIM Section 6.9
3. Commencement of Privileges
   a. The privileges of any instructional rating will commence upon successful completion of the rating course and will be valid for 30 days with a candidate logbook endorsement by the IE
   b. The rating must be processed at USPA headquarters to be considered valid after the 30-day grace period expires

G. CHALLENGING THE WINGSUIT INSTRUCTOR RATING COURSE OR RENEWING AN EXPIRED WINGSUIT INSTRUCTOR RATING

1. Persons with a current non-USPA Wingsuit Instructor rating or expired USPA Wingsuit Instructor rating must:
   a. Satisfactorily conduct at least one complete student evaluation jump with a Wingsuit Instructor Examiner acting as a simulated student, using the training method demonstrated in the Wingsuit Instructor course, to include all jump preparation, supervision during the jump, and debriefing.
   b. Pass the Wingsuit Instructor Course written examination with a score of at least 80%.
   c. Non-USPA Wingsuit Instructors must present a rating card or other proof of the non-USPA Wingsuit Instructor rating to USPA headquarters along with the USPA Wingsuit Instructor Rating proficiency card

2. For all other persons under the direct supervision of a USPA Wingsuit I/E:
   a. Demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of wingsuit instruction syllabus as per the USPA SIM
   b. Demonstrate competence to gear up and check a wingsuit student.
   c. Demonstrate competence to spot for a wingsuit student
   d. Receive personal instruction from a USPA Wingsuit I/E on the following emergency areas:
      i. Aircraft exits
      ii. Instability recovery (flat spins etc.)
      iii. Equipment malfunctions
   e. Complete one satisfactory USPA Wingsuit training evaluation
   f. Pass the USPA Wingsuit written examination with a score of at least 80%.
   g. Conduct at least two Wingsuit First Flight jumps with actual or simulated students (evaluators or jumpers with at least 300 jumps who hold a USPA C or higher license)

3. Any person may obtain a USPA Wingsuit Instructor Rating by challenging the Wingsuit Instructor Rating Course and must meet all of the prerequisites for the USPA Wingsuit Instructor Rating.
H. KEEPING A USPA WINGSUIT INSTRUCTOR RATING CURRENT

1. USPA Wingsuit Instructors may annually renew their ratings with their USPA membership by paying the annual rating renewal fee and providing the documentation of any of the following:
   a. That the training was initially earned within the previous 12 months (renewal fee and signature required).
   b. That the applicant has met the annual rating renewal requirements by performing all of the following within the previous 12 months.
      i. Acted as instructor for 10 (ten) First Flight Courses or 10 (ten) licensed skydivers acting as simulated students in a First Flight Course who have been fully briefed on the procedures of exit, navigation, and deployment as per the USPA SIM Sec 6.9, and acted as instructor for Five First Flight Students who have not yet been cleared for wingsuit free-fall.
      ii. Attended a USPA Instructor Seminar
      iii. Acquired the signature of a current S&TA, I/E, or member of the USPA Board of Directors on the renewal application to verify that the renewal requirements were met.

I. COURSE OVERVIEW

2. USPA’s Wingsuit Instructor program includes
   a. The First Flight Course
      i. Safety procedures for exits, deployment, instability recovery
      ii. Specific training techniques
      iii. Navigation/spotting training
      iv. 
   b. First Flight Course Performance standards
   c. Problem solving
   d. Jump preparation and equipment checks
   e. Demonstration and practice sessions
   f. Written Test
   g. Evaluation