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GUIDELINES FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE LANDING AREAS

High Performance Landing Areas (HPLA) will all have different requirements and rules. Each should be assessed by at least one current British Skydiving approved CT Coach and the CI.

HPLAs with a water landing area will have additional SOP entries to those laid out here.

HPLAs for Display Parachuting are also subject to Risk Assessments.

a. Size of area.

HPLAs should be a minimum of 100 meters in length. The HPLA surface must be acceptable for high-speed landings where the jumper could be sliding to a stop.

b. Proximity to hazards

The approach into the HPLA must be free from major hazards and largely free of minor hazards. There must be a minimum height clearance of 10 meters over minor hazards on the approach. Overshoot areas must be free of major hazards and minor hazards. A jumper landing badly might travel a considerable distance without being in full directional control. Therefore, the end of the overshoot area must be no closer than 10 meters from members of the public.

Each landing area will have its own unique terrain. Special considerations to features that creates turbulence across a HPLA should be taken in to account. Some high-performance canopies are better in turbulent conditions than others. However, all canopies have the potential to suffer collapse and a rapid loss of lift on days with turbulence and wind shear. Closure of the HPLA should be made if conditions are deemed unsafe (due to direction, strength or unstable air).

HPLAs may have more than one landing direction. Each should be evaluated for hazards on left and right turns to approach. Should they need to, a jumper must be able to abandon a turn without having to avoid a major hazard.

c. De-confliction with other jumpers, either by time or distance.

Jumpers using HPLAs need to increase their situational awareness to maintain safety.

i. HPLA jumpers must communicate their actions to each other.

As part of the SOP jumpers must be provided with a HPLA risk assessment and map showing any hazards on approach, with minimum clearance heights if required.

ii. Jumpers must know who is using the HPLA.

Knowing this is key to situational awareness. After deployment all jumpers must locate each other and maintain a good visual contact throughout their descent. This is generally why no more than 5-6 jumpers should be attempting to land in the HPLA on any given pass.

iii. Jumpers brief the order in which they intend to land.

Discussion about the landing sequence is highly important. Factors include deployment altitude, wing loading and type of turn. Unless they are first, jumpers will locate the canopy colour they are following, and the canopy following them. If they find another jumper has inadvertently overtaken them in the stack knowing the sequence has changed is critical.

iv. Maintaining separation.

PTOs with smaller landing areas may not be able to have a separate HPLA. Separating those who wish to swoop with those who are flying regular circuits requires special consideration.

Separate passes would be one example. A canopy pilot landing first or last might be another. Jumpers making a high-performance landing must give priority to canopies below and not initiate a turn unless all canopies below have landed. They must never fly through traffic.

v. HPLA map.

The HPLA map on the flight-line should be used to help identify jumper's set-up points and turn directions to each other. Colour codes (or other) can be used to help jumpers identify gate entry points.

vi. Landing area safety.

Jumpers must be aware of the post landing environment they are in and ensure their own safety whist moving around the HPLA. (i.e. facing any incoming landings, with helmets on, movement out of HPLA etc.).

British Skydiving members in the HPLA (judges, photographers etc.) must be aware of the high speeds involved and know how to minimise the risk to themselves.

d. Qualification and currency of HPLA jumpers.

Jumpers who have not made a high-performance landing within in the previous month or have made less than 100 jumps in the previous 12 months into HPLAs, can make no more than a 90-degree turn, until cleared by an approved CT Coach or the CI.

e. Altitude and Air Density

Jumpers should understand the effects of these factors and make their turn height decisions accordingly.

For instance: One PTO that is at 500 feet above sea level and had a density altitude of over 2500 feet on the hottest day in 2020.

f. Medical

HPLAs are inherently dangerous. With injuries tending to be more severe than regular landings. PTOs might wish to review the emergency response time from the medical agency they rely on for such injuries.

Even with good adherence to the rules, due to the increase of speed there is a greater risk of a canopy collision. PTOs should consider having more than one medical kit.

Figure 1 (Example only): All shaded Red Zones have minimum clearance height of 10 meters. Coloured ground markers are used to identify the entry gate.