



SAFETY NOTICE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Ballistic Parachute Systems (BPS) in General Aviation Aircraft

*(from the FAA's Small Aircraft Directorate
 and the Aircraft Rescue & Fire Fighting Working Group (ARFFWG))*

Airbags have become a standard safety feature in passenger vehicles on the road. Propellant cartridge technology has also made inroads into general aviation safety in the form of ballistic parachute systems (BPS) installed on many small aircraft and light sport aircraft. These ballistic parachutes consist of an actuation handle in the cockpit that ignites a rocket. The rocket pulls out a large parachute that can lower the entire aircraft to the ground. **If this rocket were to deploy from an accident aircraft on the ground, and someone at the accident site was in the way, the result could be fatal.** The system gives aircraft pilots and passengers a great safety advantage, but may pose a hazard to first responders when the aircraft is on the ground.



Ballistic Parachute Systems have an actuation T-handle (usually red) within reach of the pilot attached to a sheathed cable. The cable runs directly into the rocket igniter attached to the parachute container. In most cases, the parachute deploys up and aft, and the entire assembly is located close to the aircraft center of gravity; around where the wing and fuselage meet.

Most aircraft will have a triangular warning label as indicated below that identifies where the rocket leaves the aircraft. **If you see that triangular warning label, you should avoid that area.** Additional labels may be on the aircraft indicating installation of a BPS, usually located near the entrance to the aircraft.



Also, if the parachute system was deployed and the parachute is out of the aircraft, **don't enter the aircraft until the parachute canopy is collapsed and detached from the airframe.** If the canopy were to reopen and catch in the wind, the airplane could move unexpectedly and without control. These parachutes have dragged otherwise undamaged accident aircraft for over a mile on the ground. The canopy can be collapsed by spraying it with water or carefully cutting the suspension lines. Roll up and secure a collapsed canopy to prevent re-inflation.

The Airport Advisory Committee and the Department of Public Works and Transportation ask that all first responder agencies make their volunteers aware of this potential hazard. More definitive guidance will be provided as developed by the Federal Aviation Administration and the Aircraft Rescue & Fire Fighting Working Group (ARFFWG). For more information about the airport and the airport advisory committee, please contact the Department of Public Works and Transportation at (301) 863-8400 x 3565.