Argus Automatic Activation Device Bulletin

From: Bryan Burke, SDAZ Safety and Training Advisor
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Problem
Due to some problems with Argus AADs, many harness/container manufacturers have issued service bulletins mandating removal of the Argus from their system before the next jump.

Not all manufacturers have taken this step. However, jumpers need to know that the Argus incidents may indicate an extremely worrisome problem. Not counting the recent incident in San Marcos, Texas where the cutter may have been jammed by a piece of foreign debris, there have been four reported incidents where the cutter fired but did not fully cut the loop.

In at least two situations the reserve did not deploy. If the cutter is packed above the pilot chute, it can mechanically bind on the loop. This could prevent the reserve from opening even if the handle is pulled!

A misfire that does not cut the loop presents yet another danger regardless of where the cutter is positioned in the rig. It appears the loop can be partially cut, then worn through to the point where it will eventually break. This could happen at any time during a skydive or, even more dangerous, during the climb-out and exit.

It is unclear as to when the cutters were fired relative to when the loops broke. Were the units then jumped again, appearing normal? We do not know. Therefore, even if your Argus is not turned on, it may still pose a threat. Until more details come in from the field we simply do not know how serious the Argus cutter problem is.

Action
Whether or not your container manufacturer has put out a service bulletin on the Argus, Skydive Arizona feels that the potential risk to other jumpers and to our aircraft from an unplanned reserve deployment justifies banning this device from our aircraft until the issue is resolved.

If your rig contains an Argus AAD you must have it removed before your next jump in our aircraft.

Note that turning the AAD off does not necessarily eliminate the risk. It is possible the device could continue to appear functional after partially cutting the loop.

Feel free to discuss this issue with me if you have a question or concern.

Bryan Burke, SDAZ Safety and Training Advisor