

Safe shared airspace - **avoiding active Drop Zones**

This is a self-briefing for sailplane pilots.
The charts included here are illustrative only. Please refer to the
current chart and AIP for detail.

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Where?

Weather permitting, parachuting (including skydiving) usually takes place within a notified Drop Zone (DZ). DZs, radius 1.5nm up to a notified altitude (e.g. up to FL150), are detailed in the UK AIP and on the ½ million chart.

Parachuting (e.g. skydiving displays) can also take place temporarily in volumes of class G airspace and in Danger Areas (e.g. D129) subject to NOTAM.

DZs are included on the ½ million chart and in most moving map files (SkyDemon example in the insert).

British Skydiving provides a 'find a DZ' search tool with contact details at

<https://britishskydiving.org/find-drop-zone/>

Most DZs operate at weekends, however some operate 7-days per week, am until evening.



How?

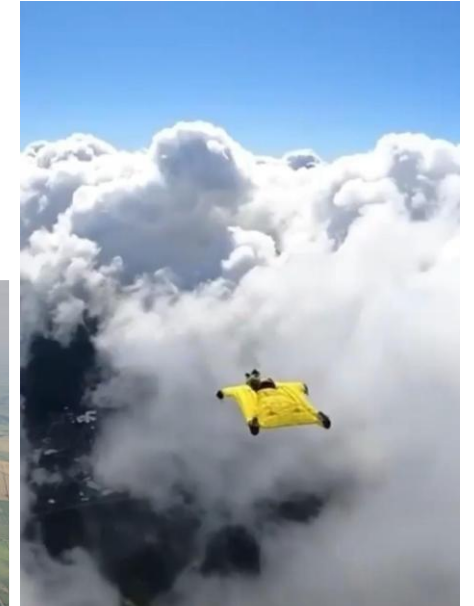
Most sport parachuting (e.g. as governed by British Skydiving) involves trained skydivers and trainees or passengers who are carried in a 'jump aircraft' to height (often to around 12,000' agl) upwind of the DZ.

A qualified 'DZ controller' visually checks the airspace within the DZ and liaises with the drop aircraft.

The skydivers exit the aircraft, freefall as required, then open their canopies to land in a designated parachute landing area.

It is possible that at height, particularly in a strong wind, skydivers will be falling outside of the DZ. A wingsuit glide angle is around 1 in 3.

The parachute aircraft pilot usually carries out the most time efficient noise avoid climb and descent profile possible, often outside the DZ.



Hazards?

Skydivers may not leave the aircraft if, at the point of exit, the ground between the opening point and the intended landing area is not visible. Which means that skydivers occasionally drop through cloud.

A skydiver in freefall including when using a wingsuit is almost impossible to see in flight.

Tandem canopies can be found from around 5500 agl, and skydiver canopy formations at any height in the notified airspace.

A skydiver or canopy has limited manoeuvrability.

Jump aircraft pilots may not be aware of the likelihood of sailplanes operating in class G, nor how sailplanes operate, e.g. sailplanes congregate in thermals under cumulus clouds or along cumulus cloud streets.

Jump plane pilots descend as quickly as possible ready for the next lift and may descend through cloud.



Can I fly into a DZ?

Unlike a Danger Area, permission is not required to fly into a DZ. However, the ANO Article 240 notes that ‘a person must not recklessly or negligently act in a manner likely to endanger an aircraft, or any person in an aircraft’. Article 241 notes ‘that a person must not recklessly or negligently cause or permit an aircraft to endanger any person or property’. A pilot who flies into a DZ and in doing so endangers an aircraft or person is likely to be prosecuted.

DZs partner with a nearby ATC Unit which can assist pilots, e.g. re active DZ status.

It makes sense to assume that a DZ is active unless confirmed otherwise.

The DZ controller can normally advise on the current status of any skydiving activity.

Gliding and aeroplane flying takes place within at least one DZ under agreed local rules and protocols that apply to those **locally based aircraft**.

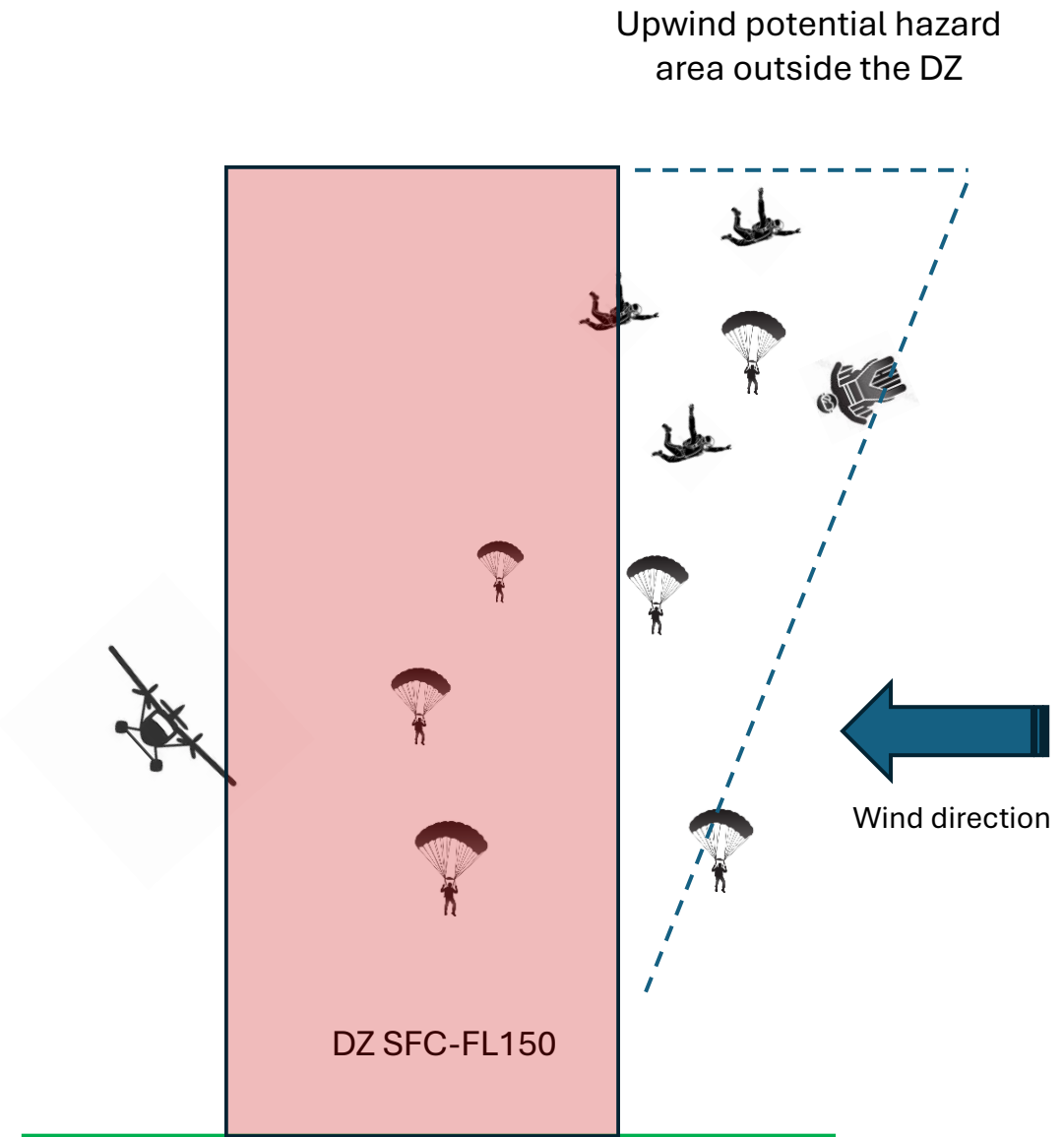


Help to manage the risk

Plan ahead & manage the risk by remaining clear of active DZs.

The greatest hazard is midair conflict with an unseen skydiver or descending drop aircraft. So:

- Unless otherwise confirmed, assume that a DZ is active.
- Don't fly close to an active DZ unless you need to.
- If you do need to fly close to an active DZ, be particularly careful upwind of the DZ. See right.
- Be aware that *not all* drop aircraft are FLARM equipped.
- Be aware that a DZ controller will not give permission to enter an active DZ. They may provide current DZ status information, e.g. 'dropping in two minutes'. You will need to know the DZ frequency in advance.



Illustrative and not to scale

More information

[UK AIP](#)

[British Skydiving](#)

[CAA Parachuting](#)

[BGA maintaining safe airspace information](#)