

# Snake River BASE Academy

*Higher Education for Lower Freefall*

---

## Jim Hickey Incident Report

Jim Hickey was killed BASE jumping at the Perrine Bridge, in Twin Falls, Idaho, USA, on May 7th, 2015 around 5:30pm.

### Summary of Incident

Jim was attempting a “burning parachute cutaway” jump. He planned to jump with a parachute that had been lit on fire, separate from the burning parachute, and deploy a his normal BASE canopy in freefall. Jim exited the bridge with the burning parachute, according to plan. He separated from the burning parachute too low, and although he deployed his normal parachute normally, there was insufficient altitude for the canopy to inflate prior to impact with the water below the bridge. Jim’s container opened and his canopy achieved line stretch, but with insufficient inflation his descent rate at impact was not survivable. Jim was retrieved by other jumpers to the pick up boat, but was not breathing and had no pulse on retrieval. His body was transported by boat to Centennial Waterfront Park, and he was declared dead there and his remains transferred to the Twin Falls County Coroners office.

### Preparation

Jim had been jumping for close to a decade, and had made several hundred BASE jumps during that time. He had also made thousands of skydives from aircraft.

Jim had been working to prepare this jump for quite a long time. He arrived in Twin Falls a week prior to the accident, on Thursday, April 30th. He worked alone for several days, and asked other jumpers to assist him beginning Monday, May 4th.

Jim had made extensive and detailed plans for the jump. The folder of handwritten plans and notes in his personal effects contained more than 50 pages of information.

Jim had made two burning parachute cutaway jumps from aircraft (at Skydive Arizona) previously, making him one of only a handful of individuals to ever perform this jump, and one of only three people to have made more than one successful burning parachute cutaway jump. He had made one jump during daylight and a second jump at night.

---

**WWW.SNAKERIVERBASE.COM**

137 Main Avenue East • Twin Falls, ID 83301 • USA • +1.208.420.2602

*info@SnakeRiverBASE.com*

# Snake River BASE Academy

*Higher Education for Lower Freefall*

---

In preparing this jump at the bridge, Jim successfully performed around 10 intentional cutaway jumps in the 4 days prior to the accident.

Jim had also prepared and burned two parachutes to test burn rates and consumption patterns as part of his jump planning.

Given his combined experience in BASE and burning parachute cutaways, he was likely the best prepared jumper in the world to attempt this jump.

## Equipment

### Container:

BASEr

Manufacturer: Ulster County Canopies and Containers, Gardiner New York, USA

Date of Manufacture: June 2007

Serial Number: 250910

### Burn Canopy:

Cruiselite 220

Manufacturer: Par-Flite, Inc, Pennsauken, New Jersey, USA

Date of Manufacture: unknown

Serial Number: unknown

### Primary Canopy:

Consolidated Rigging Blackjack 260

Manufacturer: Consolidated Rigging, Inc, Hood River, Oregon, USA

Date of Manufacture: January 2009

Serial Number: BL-260 000879

### Pilot Chute:

Asylum Designs 42" Toxic (all ZP)

## Discussion:

On the fatal jump, Jim's burning parachute failed to inflate properly and did not create very much drag. His descent rate under the burning canopy was very high. Jim appeared to have both hands on his risers, as if trying to "work" the burning canopy into a more inflated position. He eventually abandoned this effort and cut away, deploying his canopy normally but too low.

---

**WWW.SNAKERIVERBASE.COM**

137 Main Avenue East • Twin Falls, ID 83301 • USA • +1.208.420.2602

*info@SnakeRiverBASE.com*

# Snake River BASE Academy

*Higher Education for Lower Freefall*

---

Jim was aware of and had discussed the possibility that the structural integrity of the burning parachute might be so compromised that it exerted very little drag force to slow his descent.

This scenario was covered in Jim's extensive notes and plans before the jump. On the 28th page of his notes he wrote:

“Freefall

3 seconds from launch or 5 seconds as I timed one of my roll overs which was 5 seconds from beginning of run off to flying canopy

or

until under burning canopy in vertical position

or

when feel burning parachute drag on me (I may not feel it)”

In this situation, his plan was to cut away and deploy his primary canopy. He executed this plan, but was too low for his primary canopy to achieve full inflation.

This report was compiled by Tom Aiello.

---

**WWW.SNAKERIVERBASE.COM**

137 Main Avenue East • Twin Falls, ID 83301 • USA • +1.208.420.2602

*info@SnakeRiverBASE.com*