

## Parachutist walks away from power line crash

[Michael Reagan@TimesRecord.Com](mailto:Michael_Reagan@TimesRecord.Com) 09/27/2004 BOWDOINHAM — Mark Rideout took to the air Sunday evening in a powered parachute above Ridge Road. He ended up dangling from power lines before the craft dropped back to the ground.

The crash did not cause serious injury to the 52-year-old Bowdoinham resident, but it did knock out power to more than 100 Central Maine Power Co. customers in the area.

"He's lucky to be alive," said Bowdoinham Fire Department Chief Jack Tourtelotte. "He was wrapped up in 7,200-volt wires."

Rideout was on the ground and away from the powered parachute when firefighters arrived. A rescue crew found the parachute tangled in the power lines, according to Tourtelotte.

A powered parachute consists of a parachute attached to a metal frame with a seat inside and what looks like a large fan in the back.

This morning, Rideout admitted that Sunday's crash was due to pilot error. He stressed, however, the sport is very safe and wants to promote safety in the sport. Rideout has been flying for about a month and a half.

A PPC as he called it, can cost between \$21,000 and \$22,000. He intends to fly again.

"If you fall off a horse, you get back on," said Rideout, who is disabled from a 1987 motorcycle crash in which his right leg was broken in 27 places.

Rideout was not taken by ambulance to a local hospital, Tourtelotte said. He sought medical attention later.

Town Manager Bill Giroux said that he believes the runway Rideout took off from is on a privately owned farm on Ridge Road. No licensing needs to be involved with runways of such small aircraft.

Power lines are located along the road next to the farm, he said.

The incident was reported at 5:46 p.m. Sunday at 700 Ridge Road, said Detective Sgt. John Burne of the Sagadahoc Sheriff's Department.

About 114 CMP customers in the area went without power for approximately two-and-a-half hours following the incident, said Gail Rice, spokeswoman for CMP. Power was restored at 8:15 p.m.

The utility's safety department will investigate what happened, she said.

"A powered parachute, that's been my first personal exposure to that type of accident," she said. "That's the first I've heard."

Rice was unable to say if Rideout would have to pay the bill for repairs to the downed power line. The other lines could have been cable or telephone lines.

Tourtelotte said he never had covered an incident involving a powered parachute either.

"There's always something new in this business," he said.

Richmond firefighters directed traffic on Ridge Road, which was blocked for about 45 minutes after the crash.