

# North Carolina Wind Tunnel to Get Flight Chamber



The wind tunnel facility at Waynesville. The flying area is on the left. The top of the tunnel outlet is below the deck.

An outdoor wind tunnel in North Carolina will soon be modified to make it more appealing to skydivers.

The tunnel at the Appalachian Amusement Center in Waynesville, N.C., features an airstream that is nearly 13 feet in diameter and capable of velocities of well over 150 mph, reports owner Chris Landon.

The facility in western North Carolina opened about three years ago (SKYDIVING #284). But it has attracted relatively few skydivers, Landon said. He believes experienced skydivers prefer enclosed tunnels such as those built by SkyVenture.

“Apparently skydivers feel they need to

be in a tube because they don’t have the skill to maintain position,” he said.

Skydivers seem to like tunnels with walled “flight chambers” and they seem to particularly like those where the airstream is strong all the way to the walls of the chamber.

Without the help of walls of some sort, a maneuvering person runs the risk of sliding out of the airstream and falling several feet onto whatever lies below him, typically a net or pads.

“It’s funny,” Landon added. “We never fall out. Tunnel rats don’t fall out. But I understand 4-way teams must have very close eye contact and may not have the time to pay attention to their position in the wind.” Landon has 14 freefall skydives.

Landon’s company is building a large “tube” that can be quickly positioned over the air outlet in the expanse of netting that serves as the floor of the machine. The tube will instantly create a confined flight cham-



The Golden Knights fly a 2-way piece, as another team member stands outside the air column. The flying area is covered with a different colored net. Bleachers (foreground) look down on the flying area.



The Golden Knights 4-way team in the tunnel.



The tunnel outlet sits below the safety net.

ber that skydivers seem to prefer.

He didn’t say what the tube will be made of or exactly when it will be put to use.

After nearly three years of continuous use, the wind tunnel will be closed for maintenance during January and February, Landon said.

The tower has power to spare. When the Golden Knights 4-way team visited the facility in 2005, it preferred a power setting

that was only 65% of the maximum available.

The Appalachian Amusement Center is located in far western North Carolina on the southeast edge of the Great Smokey Mountains National Park. The nearest larger city is probably Knoxville, Tenn., which is about 50 miles to the northwest. Asheville, S.C., is about 20 miles to the east. □

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## Freestylists Practice in Florida



Tristan Green (left) and Sean Macormac run through a freestyle dive recently at Skydive DeLand in Florida. Photograph by Edson Pacheco.