

I'm not using the Arca-Swiss Z1 but I have a Sidekick. Am I affected?

The warning dated May 30, 2008 only affects those using the latest version of the Arca-Swiss Z1 ball head. We are contacting all customers who have purchased a Sidekick from us since it is possible for some of those customers to have purchased the Arca-Swiss Z1 product through another source.

I see a seam, but isn't this where the clamp attaches to the stem?

The seam to look for is about 1/16" below the quick-release clamp (or mounting platform) on the ball head stem. The Wimberley quick-release clamp does not extend below the flat surface of its bottom; it seats flush on the stem top. There are two protruding nubs of metal on either side of the stem top that fit snugly into a recessed portion of the clamp that prevent the clamp from twisting once it is affixed tightly with a screw.

Won't the central screw in the center of the clamp keep the stem from coming apart?

Up to this point, we have not made any other modifications to the ball head other than to mount our C-10 QR Clamp. The top portion of the ball head stem can potentially detach with our clamp attached. The two mounting areas, the clamp-to-stem and stem-to-stem, are entirely separate. The mounting screw in the center of the quick-release clamp will not prevent the stem from coming loose or detaching.

What is the likelihood my ball head will fail?

We cannot say whether all Z1 ball heads will eventually fail at this connection. We can only say that it is more likely to occur under certain conditions that include side mounting gear in the clamp (as when using the Wimberley Sidekick), and may include extreme heat or cold, extreme dry or wet conditions, repetitive shock force, and internal factors such as the thickness of adhesive.

Have any other customer reported this issue?

We do know that the USA Arca-Swiss repair facility, Precision Camera Works, has reported that they have had at least 2 verified cases of stem connection failure that occurred with normal use of the ball head (not use in conjunction with our Sidekick). It is our concern for our customers and their gear that has prompted us to take immediate action to warn against the failure of the Z1 stem joint. We have not had any other reports to date of this failure, so we are hoping these are just isolated incidents.

Do you have any recommendations at this point?

We don't really have any recommendations at this point until we can come up with a solution. We certainly do not want to recommend that everyone who already has the new Z1 go out and buy a new ball head for use with the Sidekick. This is an issue with the

Arca-Swiss product, but we are doing the best we can to find a suitable solution for all involved. We stand by Arca-Swiss as a good product. However, we have halted sale of this version until we feel it is safe for our customers to use in the fashion we recommend with our products.

Appropriate alternatives for those who have yet to purchase a ball head would be:

**Markins M20
Kirk BH1
RRS BH55 Pro**

I haven't heard anything about this issue from Arca-Swiss. How did you come to know about it?

We were contacted by a customer who had recently purchased the Z1 Monoball from us, and he unfortunately had the ball head clamp twist on him unexpectedly in the field a few weeks ago. Thinking this was an isolated incident, we replaced the Z1 with another from our current stock and had him return the defective one to us for inspection. We were surprised when he reported a few days later that the replacement Z1 we sent him also had this failure occur at the stem upon use with the Sidekick.

Upon closer examination of the returned Z1, we were stunned to find that the stem was assembled in 2 parts that were apparently secured with a thin layer of adhesive. This adhesive came loose causing the two pieces of the stem to freely rotate, one inside the other. We also found that with enough force, the parts separated completely.

We estimate that the adhesive is applied to the smooth anodized surfaces of the stem, which we feel does not lend itself to a secure bond. This is especially true when a specific amount of force, or repeated shock force (such as slinging the rig over your shoulder with gear attached), is applied and you have the stem in a side mount orientation of 90 degrees.

What should I do now?

Use your ball head with extreme caution and report any problems that occur with use. We plan to keep you informed when we know more about the conditions under which failure may occur and can offer an effective solution. We have already discussed this with Arca-Swiss, and we are working to arrive at a solution. We are in the process of testing a number of different options.

We do not yet have complete and final answers to all questions relating to this situation, but we are doing our best to arrive at a swift and suitable resolution. If you feel you need a more immediate resolution, please contact Arca-Swiss directly as noted in our warning.