

A Proper Conditional Inspection

One of the benefits, maybe the best one, is the ability of an experimental aircraft owner to perform his or her own conditional inspection. I would imagine that many experimental aircraft owners have built their own aircraft for this reason.

I propose that the owner reconsider this option, and, instead, during the conditional inspection the owner call in someone else to inspect the aircraft. This does not mean the owner must comply with the inspector's findings. The goal is to get a second impartial view of the aircraft – wait - the goal is to have a safe aircraft. The inspector simply writes down what he or she finds and no more. The inspector does not change oil, adjust belts, tighten clamps etc... just inspects. In the end, the inspector hands the owner the clipboard of the findings and collects a check. Again, the owner does not need to comply.

After many years of performing 100hr / annual /conditional inspections on a variety of aircraft, I have developed a maintenance safety program for some flight schools, and other operators - not a maintenance program... a maintenance safety program. One part of the program is simple, after all the 100hr inspections, someone else, not affiliated with the school or operator, would come in and perform the annual inspection. The owner would gripe at the extra cost, but understood the safety aspect of the program.

Many years ago I built an RV-8 and had someone come in and do a final inspection. During the inspection, I left the building, leaving the inspector to enjoy some peace and quiet and rummage through my parts bins. After he was done, and I returned, he gave me a list of items to check. Most of the items was related to “what if you did this instead?” Or “why did you do it this way? And a few items, which paid for the inspection, was finding some FOD, loose screws, an adel clamp not connected, potential chaffs, and an item I am embarrassed to mention. I reviewed each item and made the corrections if warranted, and one of his suggestions on “what if you did this instead?” was a really good and better idea.

When you have your aircraft down for its conditional inspection, and all apart, arrange for someone to come in and inspect your aircraft. Leave the building and wait for the call that the inspection is done. The \$300 flat fee, plus travel expenses, is about right for the service. And be confident that you have a safer aircraft, and you might learn something.

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