

SHORT FINAL

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LOGBOOK MAINTENANCE*Beware of well-groomed men in perfectly-pressed blue pinstripe suits*

A well-groomed man in a perfectly-pressed blue pinstripe suit approaches your airplane as you taxi to the grass tie-down. After shutting down you hop out and begin tying down the Cessna, trying to ignore the unfamiliar face staring at you.

"Sir, may I see your paperwork and logbooks?" He flashes an official-looking badge at you. "I'm with the FAA." He then flashes a sinister smile at you.

Do these words evoke terror in your mind? Does the mere thought of having to be interrogated by the FAA send shivers up your spine? When confronted with a ramp check, most pilots have no problem with the ARROW portion of the request; the difficulties come with the aircraft log books.

It is the responsibility of an aircraft owner or operator to be sure all aircraft

inspections, maintenance and record-keeping are current. This includes the maintenance record entries. As required in the FARs, each entry should include a description of work performed or the type of inspection and a detailed description of the extent of the inspection. It must also include the date of completion of the work performed or the inspection date. Time on the aircraft must be recorded. In addition, the signature, certificate number and type of certificate held must be noted by the person approving the work.

All maintenance or inspections must be kept in a reliable record. At all costs, keep the records in a safe place. Lost or destroyed records may create a problem, particularly when confronted by the FAA. Reconstructing logbooks is not only expensive but also a time-consuming and frus-

trating process. Time on life-limited parts may be difficult to determine, and replacement of such parts may be necessary.

A caveat for aircraft owners: watch out for those Saturday-morning annuals. It may seem convenient and cost effective to take advantage of someone offering a quick, early-morning inspection. However, it is impossible to comply with an annual inspection, check service bulletins, ADs, etc. in just a few hours. Most reputable IAs will tell you that an annual inspection on a basic single-engine airplane requires an average of twelve hours; this is based on an aircraft in good condition with well-organized log books.

Keeping the weight and balance papers up to date requires time and expense. Changes in the basic design of radio and navigation equipment are considered major alterations and will require an update in

the weight and balance in order to comply with the regulations of the FAA.

With these things in mind, aircraft owners must keep their aircraft airworthy and logbooks current. Aircraft owners-to-be should include a thorough inspection of the aircraft logbooks as part of the pre-purchase inspection. Ask questions to assure no entries are bogus and that the equipment that is supposed to be present really is that equipment.

Take this advice, and the next time that well-groomed man in the perfectly-pressed blue pinstripe suit approaches with his sinister smile, you will be ready. "Sir, may I see your paper work and log books?" will be answered with an enthusiastic, "Yes, you certainly may!" You will hand him those logbooks with a smile.

Good luck, and friendly skies!