



Dear ABS Members

The recent implementation of the AD requiring the immediate inspection of all Bonanza, Debonair and Baron forward elevator cables on single pole aircraft has come as a surprise to all of us involved. It meant the instant grounding of all aircraft concerned until an inspection of the cable was undertaken. The action that prompted CASA to take this action is detailed in the article "Hanging by a Strand" in the Jan- Feb issue of the Flight Safety Digest. It is unfortunate this action provoked a flurry of unwarranted media activity which unfortunately focussed solely on Beechcraft aircraft. Further to the requirement inspection, the AD requires that the cable be replaced if the age of the cable is more than 15 years. A 60 day time period has been imposed to have this work completed.

Since the advent of these requirements, a number of aircraft have been found to have frayed or corroded forward elevator cables, including my own, WBO. My cables had not been replaced in more than 20 years and the damage to the forward elevator cable was quite advanced, but impossible to detect unless the cable was removed. I have authorised the replacement of all cables in the elevator control system, all of which are older than the 15 years limit. Personally I am pleased CASA's action forced this action before I had to contend with an inflight loss of control situation.

The ABS committee believes there is real safety issue involved that needs to be redressed urgently. Once again we are faced with a result of an ageing fleet, a situation that will continue to cause serious problems in the future. The ABS System of Maintenance, as announced in the December 2011 ABS magazine, will be focussed to prevent these situations from arising without warning, although we must all face the fact that ageing aircraft require a greater focus on maintenance.

The committee accepts and endorses CASA's actions with some reservations. We believe our relationship with CASA should be at a level where these concerns would have been conveyed to us prior to the more drastic action of grounding all Beechcraft aircraft immediately. It is conceivable action could have been taken to examine the problem and determine the degree of concern prior to a media release and the grounding of the fleet. It is also of concern that Beechcraft have been singled out from the GA fleet with the 15 year requirement. It is not believable that a cable in a Piper, Cessna or Mooney etc that is more than 15 years old is in any better condition than one in a Beech. With regard to the 60 day requirement it may have been more appropriate and certainly more cost effective for the replacement to be undertaken at the next annual inspection.

In general terms, the ABS committee supports CASA with this directive, especially as it has a very direct bearing on operating our aircraft safely. However, we hope in the future, our relationship with CASA will allow us to examine a possible safety situation, before a nation- wide grounding is implemented.

Mark Davey

President

Australian Bonanza Society

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