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Tips for a smoother annual

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6 tips for a less-stressful annual.

The Premier Aircraft Service maintenance team has compiled its top 6 insider tips to make your next annual less stressful while reducing downtime and cost.



#1: The value of legible logbooks

One of the biggest time-wasters A&Ps deal with during most annuals is incomplete and illegible airframe, engine, propeller, and avionics logbooks.

Owners typically underestimate how much information A&Ps need to review before beginning an annual inspection, especially if they are seeing the aircraft for the first time.

Your aircraft's history is even more critical if it has had any STC modifications or avionics upgrades. In many instances, having a notation of the STC or upgrade in the logbook isn't enough. The A&P will require supporting paperwork, so make sure you have it all readily available.

#2: Take the mystery out of mechanical issues

Don't wait until the day before you deliver your airplane to the shop to start putting together your airplane's annual prep package. In fact, it should start when your last annual ended.

Make a list of items you didn't take care of during that visit and keep adding to it throughout the year. Remember, the annual inspection only requires the technician to inspect critical airworthiness items and then declare the aircraft "airworthy" or otherwise.

That means that unless the problem is an "airworthiness" issue, there's a good chance the A&P won't catch it. So it's in your best interest to tell them up front.

And that list should not only include your "squawks," but any Service Bulletins (SBs) or Airworthiness Directives (ADs) that have been issued for your airplane.

Again, you are paying the A&P for their time, and if you can shave a few hours off their "paper chase," it will help reduce your bill.

#3: Your plane needs prepping too

There's nothing that shows your A&P that you value their time and expertise like delivering your airplane to their shop primed and ready for its annual.

One of the best ways to do that is to take the time to remove all the personal items, cleaning supplies, covers, and miscellaneous "junk" that has collected in your cabin and baggage areas over the months. If you don't clean it out, you'll end up paying the A&P to do it for you.

Now's also a great time to give your airplane a much-needed wash. A clean airframe not only makes it easier for the A&P to remove all the access panels, but it also makes it easier to find cracks, damaged hardware, and other airframe issues.

But be careful not to wash away any evidence of excess oil or fluid stains on the airframe. If you see any suspect areas, take photos to share with the A&P before you clean. Your technician needs as much pre-annual information as possible.

#4: When ‘help’ is actually a hindrance

It’s become common practice for aircraft owners to want to “help” with their aircraft’s annual. Sometimes to save money, but more often, they want to learn more about their aircraft.

But many A&Ps would prefer to do it all themselves. Why? For example, if you’re offering to save the A&P’s time by removing access panels, that may save time, but in many cases – especially with older airplanes – removing the panels gives the technician a chance to inspect the areas for damage and ensure that all the right fasteners are used in the right places.

If you want to help, the best idea is to ask if there’s anything you can do. The simple act of asking is always appreciated by a professional A&P.

#5: The best annual starts with choosing the *right* shop

As “experienced” as they may be, the A&P at your local airport may not be the best choice to perform your annual. And choosing the “right” shop starts with what you really want to get out of your annual inspection.

If you only want someone to “fill out the paperwork,” then pretty much any shop or freelance A&P will fit the bill. But is that really good enough?

If you really want to get the most value – from a mechanical and peace-of-mind perspective – from the annual inspection, then take the time to research a shop with not only experience with your aircraft, but a dedication to safety and quality that fits your expectations.

Of course, that can take time. Talk to other owners of aircraft like yours and ask not just who they use, but "would they use that shop again?" Then, talk to or, better yet, fly over and visit that shop.

Then, once you decide, ask what they expect you to do to prepare the information and aircraft for the annual inspection. Along with the obvious questions, you might also ask:
What are their requirements for delivery and pick-up?
How do they handle ongoing communications during the inspection?
Will they do a post-inspection flight with you?
What is their warranty?
How do they do their billing?

#6: Take the direct route, and schedule your next annual with Premier Aircraft Services

Like every part of owning and operating an airplane, finding the "right" shop for your next annual takes a lot of homework.

The good news is you can make your search easier by calling Premier Aircraft Services first. With locations in Fort Lauderdale, FL, Fort Worth, TX, and Norwood, MA, we are an FAA Part 145 Repair Station and an EASA Certified Maintenance Facility, with decades of experience providing value- and safety-centric aircraft maintenance for Beechcraft, Cessna, Cirrus, Mooney, Piper, as well as many turboprops and jets.

For more information, visit: https://premieraircraftservice.com/services/