

SERVICE BULLETINS AND YOU

If you're an aircraft owner or operator, you ignore service information at your peril.

Service bulletins are produced by aircraft manufacturers to communicate continuing airworthiness information to the owners and operators of their aircraft.

They can also be published by vendors who supply aircraft manufacturers, and by product original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

Generally, three types of information are contained in them:

- recommended methods, techniques, and practices for the performance of maintenance
- recommended modifications or inspections
- mandatory actions established as part of the type certification process.

They're usually generated as a result of defect reports received by the manufacturer or the regulator of the state of design.

The rule

Rule 91.603(a)(1) requires operators to ensure their aircraft are maintained in an airworthy condition. To do this, operators should have access to all available instructions for continued airworthiness, including service information. This is to assess whether the information applies to their operation, and to take the appropriate action. This review should be carried out by a knowledgeable person, and the outcome of the review recorded and signed by the aircraft operator in the appropriate maintenance logbook.

If you elect not to carry out a service bulletin, you should have a valid reason for it, and the reason recorded. This improves transparency and helps subsequent operators or engineers later down the line understand why a particular decision was made.

Part 119 operators, and those with a maintenance programme approved under rule 91.607, should have a documented process for conducting and recording the evaluation of service bulletins.

Complying with service bulletins

You should comply with service bulletins if:

- they're referred to in the schedule that recommends the incorporation of modifications or the performance of inspections
- your aircraft is maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's maintenance schedule
- your exposition states that mandatory service bulletins shall be complied with.

Occasionally manufacturers issue service bulletins to communicate airworthiness limitations such as component life limits or maintenance requirements.

When used in this way, the content of the bulletin is a condition of type certificate, and compliance is mandatory.

A service bulletin can, in time, become an airworthiness directive (AD) if a serious safety concern becomes evident. It's often cheaper and easier to carry out an inspection or modification while it's a service bulletin, rather than waiting until it becomes an AD. By that time, parts can be harder to obtain and free replacement offers made by manufacturers may have expired.

More information

- Continuing airworthiness notice – 05-002 *Service Bulletin Compliance*. This provides guidance to aircraft operators and maintenance engineers regarding the assessment of, and their decision as to whether they need to comply with, manufacturer's service information. This is available on www.caa.govt.nz, "Quick Links > Airworthiness Directives > Continuing Airworthiness Notices".
- Subscribe to 'Airworthiness directives' and 'Airworthiness issues' notifications by visiting www.caa.govt.nz/subscribe. It's important to subscribe to both lists as the first only provides alerts for ADs, while the latter provides alerts for other advisory information.
- Ensure you go directly to your manufacturers and suppliers to subscribe to updates, to cover all your bases. ➔