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EDITOR

MeLinda Schnyder
melinda@kingairmagazine.com

EDITORIAL OFFICE

2779 Aero Park Dr., Traverse City MI 49686
Phone: 231-946-3712

PUBLISHER

Dave Moore

PRESIDENT:

Matt Kenny

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS:

Kurt Bainbridge

PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR

Jason Smith

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Rachel Coon

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Jenna Reid

Phone: 816-699-8634
jenna.reid@vpdcs.com

ADVERTISING OPERATIONS AND ACCOUNT MANAGER

Betsy Beaudoin

Phone: 800-773-7798
betsybeaudoin@villagepress.com

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

Rhonda Kelly, Mgr.

Jessica Meek, Leah Backus

P.O. Box 1810 Traverse City, MI 49685
800-447-7367

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COVER PHOTO

By Steve Schulte

Joe & Melinda Herring with their 1993 King Air B200 (BB-1462)

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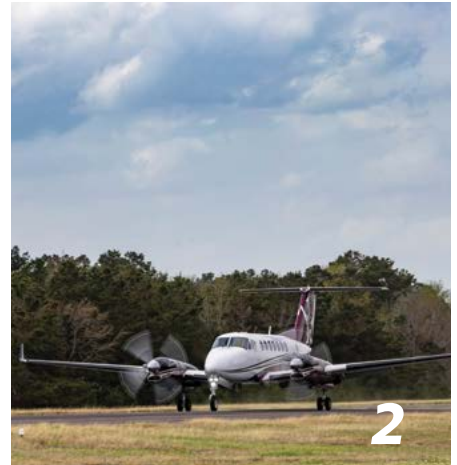
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STUPID KING AIR TRICKS

by Joe Casey | Photos by Clint Goff

Type “stupid pet tricks” in your search engine and you’ll be inundated with videos of obsessively cute animals doing some of the dumbest acts that humans have dreamt up. Fortunately, these stupid tricks are entertaining and safe. No one gets hurt, so we smile and go on with life.

Doing “stupid” in your King Air, though, is not entertaining. It could cost you gobs in downtime and dollars, and although usually not fatal, some of these acts are often committed on the path to a much more serious accident. I see some of these moves frequently as I move about in the King Air world, and they are no joke.

With a tip of the hat to late night legend David Letterman – known for his Stupid Pet Tricks, Stupid Human Tricks and Top 10 segments – I’ve compiled this list of stupid things you can do in your King Air to cause you downtime, create embarrassment and empty your wallet.

No. 10: Don’t close the door properly

We operate three King Airs for clients. Two clients know how to close the door properly. Since Texas is hot nine months a year, these passengers let the pilots perform cockpit checks before boarding and closing the door. This allows some airflow in the cabin, which is heavily influenced by the greenhouse effect.

It’s possible to close the door but not latch the handle properly. The key is to ensure the CABIN DOOR light is not illuminated. I usually look at that red light when I hear the passengers boarding and I watch the light go out to be sure the door is closed properly.

We once used our King Air for a humanitarian mission to the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian destroyed Marsh Harbour and surrounding cays. The pilot was trusted, but he failed to watch the light. They’d land at an island, feather the left engine, open the door, disembark some passengers, load others, close the door and fly to the next island. This was a hectic mission with many logistical moves, which can allow for error to creep in the door (pun intended).

Instead of shutting down the airplane and moving to the back to open and close the door, the pilot gave a quick brief on door operation to one passenger, who then opened and closed the door after each landing.

The passenger didn’t close the door properly, the pilot didn’t check the CABIN DOOR light and the door opened on takeoff at about 300 feet AGL. The door flew off the airplane – held on only by the cable – and thrashed the lower skin of the fuselage. There were bumps and bruises on the bottom of the airplane, but the biggest problem

was a puncture in the pressure vessel shaped like the door handle.

The mission was canceled, and the airplane limped home after a lot of effort. It was down for two months for repairs and it now had damage history. The bottom line? Check the CABIN DOOR light on every flight!

No. 9: Forget to preflight the knife

The knife is the flat blade with a handle between the basin and the reservoir of the potty. It keeps the blue water in the reservoir during turbulence and keeps waste in the toilet bowl from entering the reservoir.

Every King Air pilot must ensure the knife is in the correct position before each flight. If left closed, passengers using the potty during flight can lead to waste spilling beyond the basin. Once flying, you'll have no chance to open the knife and explaining to passengers how it functions can be difficult.

If the knife is open and you encounter turbulence, the contents of the reservoir will jostle out and the blue water

conditioner will stain the carpet. This is a good time to review the "Law of 6 Ps," an old Army term that applies to this discussion: "Prior Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance."

No. 8: Bump the floor lighting switch

There is a switch in the back of your King Air, near the floor, that turns on the aft light – a small light illuminating the door entry. I bet 50% of King Air pilots don't even know that switch exists and most are certainly not postflighting that switch.

The switch is powered by the battery bus and is therefore connected directly to the battery. If it is left on, you might return to an airplane with dead or seriously depleted batteries. It is so easy to accidentally kick that switch when entering/leaving the airplane or when removing baggage.

You're postflighting your King Air, right? In the Army (I flew Blackhawk and Apache helicopters), we were more adamant about a postflight than a preflight.

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No. 8

While preflights are important, postflights allow you time to address issues before the next flight. Finding those problems early is key and a postflight takes only a few minutes. Look for the lighting switch in the back of your airplane during the postflight.

No. 7: Don't guard the CLs when entering or leaving the cockpit

Thankfully we don't see this often in the accident record, but it bears reminding the pilot that the condition lever(s) will shut down the engine. It is so easy for a pant leg, headset cord, coat hem or just about anything to get tangled with a condition lever. It is so easy to simply put your hand behind the entire power quadrant when someone leaves or enters the copilot seat. That hand signals to the exiting occupant that you are watching, and you'll have the chance to save the day rapidly if something gets hung up in the exit. This same philosophy applies to guarding other levers and switches in the cockpit.

No. 6: Don't chock your airplane

You might think this doesn't need to be said but it does. We have a jar at Casey Aviation that receives \$5 fines when we witness "safety violations." Don't chock an airplane and one of us spots it? Pay five bucks. Don't install the pitot covers after a flight and someone on our team notices? Pay up. It's a fun way to instill a safety culture at our hangars, and that jar is always getting filled.

Our focus on chocking at Casey Aviation started when an airplane rolled back from a parking spot into the grass. Nothing was hurt and we got it out easily but knowing it could have been worse pushed me to bolt 20-foot angle iron into the ground behind those tiedown spots (three aircraft have benefitted from the iron over the years).

I bought 20 rope chocks from McFarlane Aviation (mcfarlaneaviation.com) that I highly recommend for ease of use. We've reduced inadvertent rolling of aircraft to zero in the last two years with our "culture of chocking." You should develop the same culture in your aviation operations.

No. 5: Don't validate your autopilot modes

I can't tell you how many times I hear pilots in recurrent training ask, "What's it doing now?" They're referring to the autopilot. When they have no clue what it is doing, they turn off the autopilot and hand fly, moving farther behind the airplane.

The simple solution is to look at the scoreboard, the small area of panel real estate that advises what the



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autopilot is doing. Being able to read that scoreboard accurately is critical to safety. I witness pilots who don't know the modes for roll and pitch and don't know the default modes for either. They focus more on wondering what the autopilot is doing than on situational awareness, and their flying suffers.

With so many new panels in King Air aircraft you must spend time learning new technologies, and when you tell your autopilot what to do, validate what it is actually doing by looking at the scoreboard.

No. 4: Don't perform a quality post-maintenance test flight

I'm a designated pilot examiner in the North Texas FAA Flight Standards District Office. We recently reviewed aircraft accident statistics at an annual meeting of the DPEs. The data showed a large uptick in accidents due to poor maintenance.

Aviation faces a shortage of maintenance technicians. The younger generation isn't interested in aviation maintenance careers, causing a global issue that trickles down to individual owner-operators. As an aviation maintenance facility owner, I can testify that hiring quality personnel is our top challenge. We've been successful in hiring incredible talent and potential talent, but it's difficult.

Treat your maintainers well, realizing it is hard to be a mechanic nowadays. Know that shops are understaffed

and overworked, so stack the deck in your favor after a maintenance event. Do thorough preflights when you pick up your airplane after maintenance as well as comprehensive post-maintenance test flights after phase inspections.

Plan for the test flight rather than just hoping everything is OK. Pick up your airplane in the morning so there's time to fix small items that will undoubtedly surface. You can even pay the maintenance facility to have that test flight conducted prior to your arrival.

No. 3: Push the life of your tires

Tires take an incredible beating due to hard landings, crosswind takeoffs and landings, improper inflation and disuse. While tires are designed for this abuse, generally speaking we do not replace tires soon enough.

The mindset of a usual King Air pilot is, "They've got a few more landings in them!" I see efficiency prioritized over safety. If you have a bald spot, change that tire. If you are showing tread, change that tire. If you have allowed the air pressure to get so low and sit so long that the tire is permanently damaged, change that tire.

This is especially true of the main landing gear tires on the dual-trunnion models of the King Air, where the outside tire absorbs all the energy in a properly flown crosswind landing. You should be landing wing-low in a crosswind, and almost every landing you experience has some sort of crosswind.

Tires endure immense abuse while holding side loads, keeping the props off the ground and dealing with your ham-footedness during ground operations. A blown nose tire can cause downtime, delayed or cancelled flights and embarrassment. A King Air with a suddenly deflated tire can be a handful on landing.

The bottom line? Don't be cheap when it comes to tires. I'll fly to that out-of-the-way airport to buy cheap fuel, but I won't be cheap with tires. They are too important to operational safety.

No. 2: Ride the brakes on landing (or takeoff)

If you have a bald spot on your tire, it's your fault and it should shock you into realizing you're not as good as you thought.

I've said to many training clients: "Your feet are on the brakes!" One trainee responded that he was not on the brakes and that I was too serious of an instructor. I fumed in the right seat, and when he landed, both main tires deflated instantly. He had landed with his feet on the brakes, balding the tires and popping them. It was everything I could do not to say, "I told you so!"

The airport's maintenance facility had the airplane off the runway in less than an hour and new tires installed in less than four hours. The pilot was embarrassed and never contacted me again. That incident showed a bad attitude and bad flight skills.

The balls of your feet must be on the bottom pad of the rudder pedals during takeoff and landing. After you land and begin to slow down, then move your feet up on the rudder pedals to stop the airplane. Rookies land with their feet on the brakes.

And the No. 1 Stupid King Air trick is (insert drumroll): Use excessive reverse

Newbies to the King Air world love reverse. Most of them move up from an airplane that didn't have reverse, and it's fun to land, throw the props into reverse and feel the "whoa boy!" However, it can cost you dearly.

When you land and move the props into reverse, you throw any loose debris from the landing surface out in front of the airplane. Your engines ingest those foreign objects. Your Ng will probably be spinning at over 30,000 rpm and turning at the speed of sound. If that pebble jumps into your inlet, somehow passes the squirrel cage and plops into the first stage of axial flow compression, all hell will break loose in the form of



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scratching, marring or denting the compressor blades, if you are lucky. If you are unlucky, the pebble will continue its destructive path downstream into the engine and you'll have a six-digit problem.

The damage probably won't be immediately apparent, as the PT6 operates well after being injured. Your next borescope inspection will reveal the damage.

At our maintenance facility we frequently see FOD (foreign object damage). One event we experienced showcases the consequences of FOD. The engine ran great, with ITT, TQ and performance numbers much like the other undamaged engine. But the borescope pictures showed an engine that had one blade on the first stage with a huge conical shape cut out of two blades. The second-stage blades also had damage. The engine had to be removed to be sent to an engine shop where it took more than \$250,000 to repair – a huge price to pay for one pebble.

The pilot didn't know where he picked up the FOD. It is hard to know for sure, but my bet is he used reverse too much, too frequently, too harshly.

Here's a tip: Don't try to turn off at the midfield taxiway and don't use reverse at all on your normal landings. Let the airplane roll to the end of the runway and hardly touch the brakes. It'd be nice if you had to add power to get off the runway. If you watch the pros, that's what they do and you'll hardly ever see a King Air pro drive the props into reverse. Put that into your program to avoid FOD incidents.

I hope my Top 10 Stupid King Air Tricks provides thoughts on how you can better operate your King Air. The words "stupid" and "King Air" should never be a part of anyone's vocabulary when they think of your flying. **KA**

Joe Casey is the owner of Casey Aviation, Inc., based at Angelina County Airport (KLFK) in eastern Texas. The company manages four King Air aircraft and provides flight training in many models of airplanes. He has 19,300 hours of total flight time, over 4,500 of which are in King Air airframes. He is a certified ATP-ME/SE commercial pilot with ASES, Rotorcraft-Helicopter/Instrument and Glider ratings. Casey is also a designated pilot examiner (DPE) with many authorizations from Sport Pilot through ATP, CFI-Initial and the BE-300 type rating issuing authority up to the ATP level and holds CFI, CFII, MEI, CFI-H, CFI-IH and CFI-G certificates. He has flown 83 North Atlantic crossings in King Air aircraft.



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Third-party Aircraft Management:

Both Parties Beware

by Kyle P. White

King Airs are excellent aircraft commonly operated by a wide range of general aviation participants – from owners who fly the aircraft themselves to companies with professional pilots or aircraft management companies that maintain and operate the aircraft on the owner's behalf, sometimes for supplemental charter use too.

Having a third party, such as an aircraft management company, oversee maintenance and operations can be a significant relief for owners. Outsourcing these critical duties to a professional operation means you pay a fee plus operating costs and simply call them and tell them when you want to leave and where you want to go. While this sounds straightforward, the relationship is complex and should be entered into with carefully reviewed, documented details as well as verification of the correct type and amount of insurance.

Any business offering services to others has duties, obligations and risks. In exchange, they receive compensation, which necessitates a contract between the

parties. Over time, I have seen an array of management contracts – some as brief as three pages, others as lengthy as constitutional amendments. Regardless of length, I recommend having an aviation-specific attorney draft or review the contract. They have seen countless cases where disputes escalate when something goes wrong and one party is unhappy. Operation begins once both parties sign the contract and after attorneys and insurance companies agree on insurance, indemnification and hold harmless clauses.

Usually, no one thinks twice about the contract until something bad happens. Unfortunately, that's when we find out if everyone truly understood what they agreed to and if the insurance was set up correctly.

What could possibly go wrong that wasn't addressed or agreed to? Here are just a few examples, among many:

- Is the owner or the manager responsible for the deductible (if any) if the aircraft is damaged in flight?

- Will new or refurbished parts be installed if the aircraft is damaged during maintenance by the management company's technician? Will the claim be paid under the Hull & Liability policy or the manager's Commercial General Liability (CGL) policy?
- When the owner decides to sell the aircraft and a pre-buy inspection reveals corrosion or damage history unknown to the current owner, who absorbs the financial loss?

Regarding deductibles and applicable policy types (aircraft policy vs. general liability vs. professional liability), it's essential to specify who is responsible under what policy and circumstances. Below are some scenarios illustrating when the owner or manager might be responsible, but ultimately, this decision should be agreed upon in the contract before a claim arises.

Claims scenario: Aircraft in flight

- A King Air is on a training flight when the landing gear fails to deploy. The crew attempts manual gear extension but does not fully comply with the checklist, causing the nose gear to collapse on landing. This situation might lead both parties to agree that the management company should cover the deductible as they were negligent since it wasn't strictly a mechanical failure.
- If the King Air is operated for the owner's financial benefit under FAA Part 135 revenue-generating flights or for the owner's specific trip as a passenger, the contract might state that the owner bears the deductible. Perhaps a caveat applies: if pilot error causes the damage, the management company pays the deductible; if it's mechanical failure, the owner is responsible.

There is no definitive right or wrong answer, but if a \$25,000 deductible is at stake, it's best to agree beforehand under which circumstances either party will bear the deductible.

Claims scenario: Aircraft in maintenance

As a King Air owner, you know the phase inspection schedule required to keep your aircraft airworthy. During these routine inspections, the aircraft is jacked up, and the landing gear is serviced and "swung." How does your management contract address the possibility of the



aircraft falling off the jacks and puncturing the wing or flap? This damage could be covered under the aircraft hull and liability policy or the general liability policy.

- If the King Air is damaged while the management company's maintenance technicians are working on it and they have a general liability policy with appropriate coverage, their policy might cover the claim. Usually, there is a deductible and since negligence is involved, one would expect the management company to cover it.
- What if the management company only has an aircraft hull and liability policy, believing they have no third-party exposure because they only work on aircraft they manage? Could they ask the owner to pay the deductible? It depends on the contract wording. And if the aircraft is on its own policy, will the insurance company subrogate against the management company? They could if the contract is not written correctly.

In the early 2000s, a major FBO with maintenance operations and a fleet of managed aircraft experienced an aircraft falling off jacks during a phase inspection. The claims adjuster determined the claim could be covered under either the general liability or the aircraft fleet policy. The aircraft policy had no deductible, while the general liability policy had a \$100,000 deductible. The adjuster paid under the aircraft policy, requiring no deductible, and authorized a full flap reskin rather than a patch. It obviously delighted the owner that the repair went above and beyond what the insurance company's obligation was. The aircraft management company was

“A contract drafted or negotiated by an aviation attorney and reviewed by an aviation-specialty insurance representative will clarify coverage and responsibilities, including who pays deductibles. Review your contracts and policies before a bad day arrives – it will ease the pain when you call the insurance company to file a claim.”

very pleased they were not asked to pay the \$100,000 deductible. This was a unique situation for sure.

Claims scenario: Newly discovered damage history

Another critical consideration: Does the management contract

require the management company to maintain professional liability coverage? You might be surprised how many management companies and aircraft brokerage firms do not carry this coverage. If this is not addressed in the management or purchase

contract, there could be significant uninsured exposure.

The difference between coverage under general liability or aircraft hull and liability policies vs. professional liability is this: Is the claim due to bodily injury or property damage or is it a financial loss resulting from professional services rendered? All examples so far involve physical damage to the King Air – not solely financial loss – triggering either the aircraft hull and liability or general liability policy.

But what if the buyer pays the management company to inspect not only the aircraft but also the logbooks? If the brokerage company represents the aircraft as having “no damage history” and the management company approves the logbooks as clean, this could create a false sense of security. Later, if a new buyer discovers damage that had been previously repaired during their inspection, they will argue the aircraft is worth less than when it was represented as not having damage history. This could drive the buyer to renegotiate the purchase price down, causing the seller to claim they have a financial loss due to the management company not catching it when they bought the plane or to the original seller who misrepresented the aircraft as “damage free.”

Such financial loss is typically not covered under general liability because the management company’s or broker’s actions did not cause physical damage but rather financial loss due to unintentional misrepresentation or inspection oversight. Without

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professional liability coverage, no coverage likely exists, leaving all parties unhappy.

Consider corrosion, which is specifically excluded from aircraft hull and liability policies. While I'm not an attorney or claims adjuster, here's a rhetorical question: If the management company responsible for maintenance improperly maintains the aircraft, resulting in corrosion, could the general liability policy be triggered? The answer is maybe. If the corrosion was caused by improper maintenance, that could trigger the general liability policy. If corrosion existed before and was missed during the pre-buy inspection, that might cause the professional liability coverage to respond. This underscores the importance of requiring both general liability and professional liability policies in management contracts.

Finally, be aware that not every peril is covered. A contract drafted or negotiated by an aviation attorney and reviewed by an aviation-specialty insurance representative will clarify coverage and responsibilities,

including who pays deductibles. Review your contracts and policies before a bad day arrives – it will ease the pain when you call the insurance company to file a claim.

These examples are just a starting point. Consider as many "what if" scenarios as possible, then document responsibilities and required insurance coverages in your management contract. **KA**

Kyle P. White, ATP & MEII, is an aviation insurance executive for a global insurance brokerage company. As a former professional King Air captain on BB-1118, he still enjoys flying his family's J-model Bonanza and Piper Cub. He can be reached at kpwhite816@gmail.com.

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Part 1:

King Air Fuel Quantity Indicating

by Paul Sneden



The news of Raisbeck and CiES improving the fuel quantity indicating system of the King Air fleet is welcome news indeed. The factory indicating systems have been the bane of many an operator and maintenance shop.

There's really nothing technically wrong with the current capacitive systems, but they can be sensitive to the environment that we operate our aircraft in and present vulnerabilities.

Capacitive level detection technology has been around since the 1940s or so and has been used in innumerable aircraft types, as well as many non-aviation applications. Where the system becomes vulnerable for us is with the tiny signals in use to prevent any ignition sources for fuel vapors. Terms like picofarads and nanosiemens become part of your vocabulary during diagnostic testing.

I won't dive too deeply into the theory, but some basics will help you understand the use of the principal piece of test gear for the King Airs, the Barfield DC400/A.

The test set allows for performing two critical measurements used in troubleshooting the aircraft's system: capacitance and insulation. Let's delve into those items and how they are pertinent to our indicating system.

Now's not the time to get into the electrical weeds. The editors draw a line on my column length, so I don't fill up the magazine! Suffice it to say you can measure capacitance in picofarads or insulation in nanosiemens without a thorough understanding of the theory, much like techs can measure volts or ohms for pass/fail uses without being able to describe the specifics.

Essentially, each of the fuel probes strategically located in the King Air wings is a capacitor. Two tubes, no electrical contact, separated by air or a level of



Barfield DC400/A

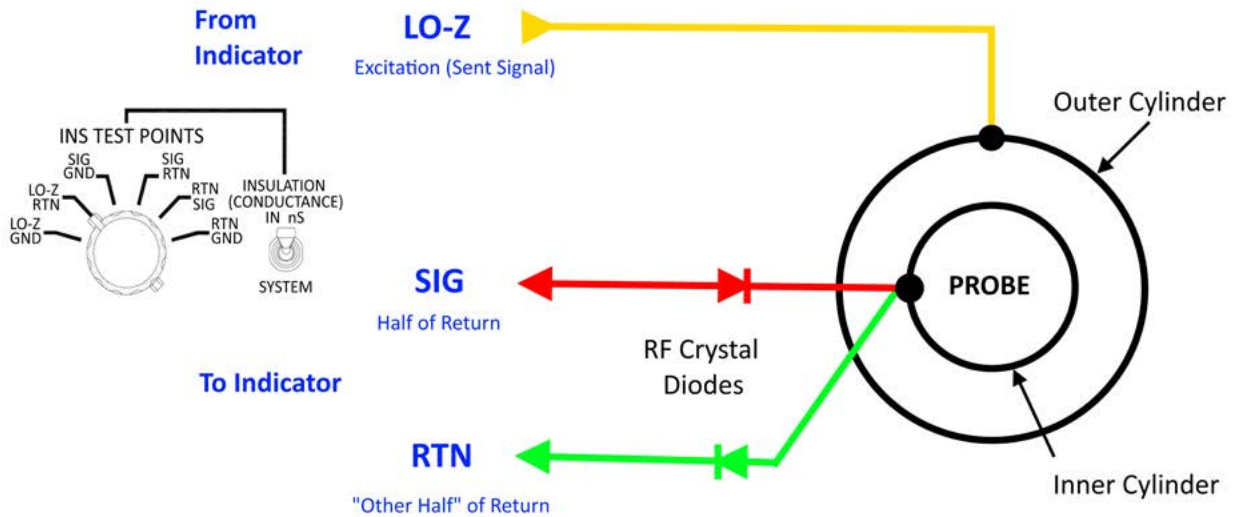


Figure 1

fuel. As the level of fuel increases between the tube walls, the electrical property of capacitance increases proportionally. Capacitance allows a changing electrical signal (like AC) to be transferred from one leg of the capacitor to the other. How strong that returning signal is provides a simple way to think of how the system works and how high the quantity indicator will rise. For my fellow geeks, the excitation signal sent out to the probes is a sawtooth waveform at 5 volts peak, at 16 kHz. The return is at a millivolt level. In a nutshell, more capacitance from more fuel equals more gauge indication.

With that in mind, the values (voltage or capacitance) are miniscule and tiny signals are subject to small system issues resulting in big problems. Anything that degrades these small signals involved can cause low indication problems. I'll return to digesting these measured levels of capacitance a bit later.

Small signals can "leak" away with any problems that may compromise high-quality insulation. That's why our test equipment includes the function to test the system insulation, and what you should be checking first during any troubleshooting event. If you consider that there are three wires involved with each probe, and the wires interconnecting them, these signals need to be very effectively isolated from each other, as well as isolated from aircraft ground. To look at the possible combinations, we need to check: Yellow (LO-Z) to ground (GND), Yellow to Green (RTN), Red (SIG) to Ground, Red

to Green, Green to Red (more in a bit), and Green to Ground (see Figure 1).

In all cases, the amount of resistance should be very high (> 20 megohms). The test set measures using the inverse of that called conductance. High resistance = low conductance. Get it? The magic number in King Airs is less than 50nS (nanosiemens, our unit of measure). That equates to greater than 20 megohms. The reason for not using a Megger here is that Meggers typically send a high voltage in an attempt to break down insulation. That's not a great idea for a fuel vapor environment.

The physical insulation itself is less frequently the problem with these tests than corrosion built up in system interconnections.

So why do the insulation test before checking the system capacitance? Because the insulation test can be performed regardless of the fuel state in any of the aircraft's tanks. If you can identify a wiring issue with insulation testing, you may be able to correct it with no need to defuel or consider calibration whatsoever. You can save a ton of time and effort by testing insulation first and it can be started at the back of the indicators.

That less than 50nS value applies to all the combinations provided by the test set switch, except for the SIG/RTN position, which will return an "out of range" indication of "1." That's because the test uses DC for insulation tests and that setting has the plus (+) on SIG and the minus (-) on return. The probes contain low-voltage crystal diodes and in that setting you're



Corroded connectors

reading through both. That's lots of conductance and it should be.

Any readings too high on the other settings become a case of "find the short." It may not be an actual out-of-range "1," but the need to start isolating the system

to make that conductance disappear is much the same mentality as trying to isolate a shorted wire. There are a few connectors that you can use as isolation initially. One set is behind and slightly forward of the indicator panel and unfortunately below the storm window. This location is always worth a look, since water intrusion is not our friend. These two connectors are circular black plastic and are quite common in King Airs and other Beech products. These connectors are not likely the cause of insulation test failure, but they are easy access and if your problem reading goes away when disconnected, you'll be sure you need to head out to the wing.

The other two points with connectors for system isolation are the wing break (inside the fairing that runs down the line from wing to nacelle). Access it from the top, but if you have a wing locker it will need to be off. Splitting that wing break will remove or confirm whether the problem is inboard (wing center section) or outboard of that point.

The last point worth trying before getting out your

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Operators can improve the reliability of their systems by changing one matrix block to three 4-way splices.

plastic red and white extraction tool is found above the panel near the wing integral fuel cell on King Air 200s and 300s. The panel to remove to gain access is the first panel inboard and in line with the five (flush) wet wing fuel panels on the wing underside. Again, it's not likely that the insulation problem is out there, but for the want of a few screws it's certainly worth isolating the two probes that reside out in that wet wing.

Beyond those disconnections, I'm afraid it's time to start de-pinning individual probes to continue isolating the system looking for that insulation test failure. You'll be de-pinning M81714 splices and matrix blocks. Be sure to use a plastic red and white extraction tool. These are not the same as the metal version. The plastic tool has a thicker wall to displace the contact locks properly. The white end is your extractor.

The interconnections, particularly the junction (matrix) blocks, are common places to find connection or insulation issues. These are great junctions for many uses in avionics and such, but Beech's choice to use these out where they get wet wasn't their finest hour. Look closely at the blue portion of the block. If it appears to be swollen at all, don't waste your extraction tool or time on it. Go for replacement since the swelling is due to internal corrosion and absorbing moisture. Intermittent indicating issues can often be located by misting water on the matrix blocks and interconnections. Only if there's a problem inside the junctions should this disturb your readings.

Since we're on the matrix blocks, many operators have improved the reliability of their systems by changing one matrix block to three 4-way splices instead. Without the black plastic section, the blue rubber splices are more resistant to water. In any case, be sure the unused holes are filled with a red plastic MS27844-20-1 (or 2) sealing plug.

If you have corrected any insulation issues with just wiring repairs, there's no need to recalibrate the system. Recalibration is only required after replacing probes or an indicator or performing the indicator tests found in the manuals.

During insulation testing it's important to realize that all the Yellow (LO-Z) wires are tied together electrically, regardless of the main and auxiliary systems. That means a LO-Z/RTN or LO-Z/GND failure can happen anywhere and show up during both main and aux testing. The same is true for Green (RTN) wiring. Only the Red (SIG) wiring stays independent for main/aux systems. On C90-series aircraft, the same is true for the NAC/TOTAL wiring. On older 90/A/B/E90s, check into the serial-specific wiring. Some predate the capacitive system or have unique wiring.

Give Service Bulletin 2037 from 1985/1995 a look. That's of particular importance when you feel like you've disconnected everything while troubleshooting an insulation issue but still have a problem. Many aircraft were made with a conduit from the inboard aux probe

that comes into the pressure vessel carrying those aux wires. The inside ends of these were factory sealed to reduce cabin pressure leakage and that creates a trap for water where the wires can reside for years without ever getting the chance to dry out. In this case, the problem truly is saturated wire insulation and they'll need to be replaced. Bottom line: Before pulling in the new wires, be sure you have a way for the conduit to drain (including drilling a hole).

In this issue, we've covered the initial testing you should consider when troubleshooting the fuel quantity indicating system. In the next issue, I'll delve into the capacitive testing to ensure you have a healthy collection of wing probes and we'll take a closer look at crew squawks versus how those observations happen. Prevention of future problems will also be covered.

In another future issue, I have detailed tips in mind for dealing with connectors, pins, sockets, extractors and

crimping. Those subjects have been hoarded too long by our avionics brethren but can easily be accomplished by any A&P with a mind to learn.

As always, reach out with any questions or suggestions for future columns.

Keep them flying! **KA**

Paul Sneden is the owner/president of KingAirDOM, a consulting firm, and King Air Maintenance Academy in Jupiter, Florida. He has been in the general aviation business for more than 50 years, holding numerous positions in aircraft maintenance, avionics and quality assurance. Beginning in 2006, Paul became immersed in the King Air world, creating and instructing maintenance courses for 90-, 200- and 300-series King Airs. He is also a regular speaker at the annual King Air Gathering. Reach him at paul.s.kamag@gmail.com or at 561-596-8626 (U.S. Eastern time zone).

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Non-pilot owner Joe Herring shares what he learned refurbishing his 1993 King Air B200, *Geaux Aire*

by MeLinda Schnyder | Photography by Steve Schulte

Every time Joe and Melinda Herring walk up to their 1993 Beechcraft King Air B200, they think about the multitude of colors they considered for the stripe in the exterior paint scheme and the many carpet samples they scrutinized for the interior. Beyond a finished airplane, they see the decisions, delays, redesigns and lessons learned during a yearlong refurbishment that touched nearly every inch of the aircraft they call *Geaux Aire*, an homage to Joe's Cajun roots.

While getting to the finish line took longer than expected and required far more patience than he imagined, Joe said it was worth it to be able to settle into the cabin of an airplane that is fast, capable, distinctive and tailored to the way he and Melinda travel.

"I look back at the whole process with a lot of pride and satisfaction," he said. "It was frustrating at times, no question. But when it was all said and done, we ended up with an airplane that really fits our mission, feels like home to us, and we've had a lot of fun with it already."



Melinda and Joe Herring with Geaux Aire, their 1993 King Air B200.

Now 10 months into enjoying the completed Geaux Aire, Joe shares his experience and lessons learned as a non-pilot owner taking on coordinating the extensive overhaul.

The path to aircraft ownership

Joe used business aviation for much of the second half of his career in health care, appreciating it as an executive tool for efficient travel. When he retired a decade ago in the Savannah, Georgia, area, he continued flying privately including using Wheels Up and Jet Linx services.

When a friend, business owner and non-pilot aircraft owner started talking to Joe about ownership, he initially scoffed at the idea thinking he didn't fly enough.

"He told me he wanted to take me on three or four flights over a period of months so I could really understand the convenience and economics of having your own airplane," Joe recalled.

Those flights made an impression. A fly-fishing trip to the Bahamas got them from Savannah to the dock



at South Andros in 1 hour and 45 minutes. A visit to his mother in Louisiana took two hours instead of a full day of commercial travel and delivered them to a small airport just minutes from her home. A day trip to Annapolis, Maryland, to see a friend's boat construction project sealed the deal.

"By then, I was hooked," he said.

That same friend felt a King Air matched the Herrings' mission profile, and Joe had good memories of flying in King Airs via several private aviation companies. Soon they'd found their first airplane: a one-owner 1999 King Air C90 being sold by the University of Georgia. It proved to be an ideal introduction to ownership and gave him



Interior details of the refresh include contrast teal seat stitching on black leather seats and true burl walnut cabinetry.

firsthand experience with the realities of operating his own aircraft.

"That C90 turned out to be a sweetheart," he said. "My wife and I found that we used it plenty, and a couple of dry leases helped with covering the cost of inspections, repairs and fixed expenses. We enjoyed it far more than I thought we would."

It even opened the door to trips they had never imagined taking. One favorite became what they called their "magic carpet ride" – a quick 16-minute flight to Amelia Island with another couple, a walk on the beach

for sunset photos, a great dinner and then back home by 10 p.m.

The C90 also clarified what Joe wanted next.

"It was cost effective, it was a time machine, and while I didn't want to get carried away, I wanted to go a little faster, a little higher and a little farther," he said.

A few months into his search in 2024, Joe found a 1993 King Air B200 with the right fundamentals: a solid airframe with only 4,000 hours, upgraded -52 Blackhawk engines, most of the Raisbeck modifications, BLR winglets and enough promise to justify taking on a



Leftover fabric, leather and teal thread from the interior fabrication was used to create luggage to match Geaux Aire.

major project. He bought the aircraft in August 2024, knowing it would need extensive work before it would become the airplane he had in mind.

His expectation was ambitious but reasonable: If things stayed on the schedule offered by the various shops and vendors, the airplane might be ready for a planned family Christmas trip.

Instead, the refurbishment extended well beyond the holidays. Geaux Aire was finally completed just in time for a family trip to Elbow Cay, Bahamas, in June 2025.

"My thought was it was a solid airplane and even if my plans didn't work out, I could probably sell it for what I was paying for it so I wasn't taking a lot of risk," Joe said.



The Herrings upgraded BB-1462 to Garmin G1000 NXi avionics with Autothrottle and Autoland. Custom yokes match the contrasting teal stitching on black leather found in the cabin.

"I had never done anything like refurbishing a plane, but I'd done a lot of complex projects. My wife signed up and we took it on as a project together. I love creating things together in a way that gives both of us ownership in the process and the outcome."

Customizing Geaux Aire

What followed the Herrings' purchase of BB-1462 was a true nose-to-tail refurbishment. The aircraft received a major avionics upgrade to the Garmin G1000 NXi flight deck, including Autothrottle and Autoland, along with new interior, new paint scheme and performance improvements. Overhauling MT-Propeller's 5-blade props and the landing gear, as well as adding Raisbeck leading edges, an Airtex moving map and additional sound insulation were also part of the refresh.

More than a list of upgrades, the Herrings focused on cohesion so that Geaux Aire feels thoughtfully considered from front to back and inside to outside. That consistency came in part from the work of Paul Hawkins, sole proprietor of Flying Cow Upholstery in Savannah.

"Paul was a key partner and played a major role in the project," Joe said. "He helped us think through not just the interior, but how the whole airplane aesthetic should come together. We spoke at least three times a week for months."

Paul helped the Herrings envision the aircraft's finished identity from the outset by refining the original paint scheme, carrying those colors into the interior, reimagining the cabin aesthetic and making



The Herrings credit Paul Hawkins (right), sole proprietor of Flying Cow Upholstery in Savannah, Georgia, as a key partner in creating Geaux Aire.

countless detail decisions throughout the airplane. Choices about the thickness and color of the contrasting seat thread, smooth versus grain leather, pleated window shades versus polarizers and whether to resurface the cabinetry in laminate or real burl walnut veneer all took time, samples and careful evaluation.

As another example, once the headliner and side panels were removed and stripped of their old fabric, they showed their age. The panels needed to be repaired and reinforced before they could be recovered and reinstalled.

Working from the Herrings' overall vision, Paul thought spatially and used practical design logic to help translate ideas into a finished interior that was distinctive without being

overdone. He helped modernize the floor appearance with seat-track and seat-leg covers, and he solved smaller functional issues, such as making cabinet drawers and tables work more smoothly – details that materially affect how an airplane feels in everyday use.

"Paul has a very good eye, but he also understands how things need to work," Joe said. "That combination made a real difference."

Joe also noted the level of finish Paul brought to the project, from aligning every visible Phillips screw in the wall and ceiling panels to using leftover fabrics to craft custom luggage for the aircraft.

Melinda was also closely involved on the aesthetic side, helping select colors, fabrics and finishes, even



Joe Herring owned a 1999 King Air C90 before buying this 1993 King Air B200 two years ago.

within the limitations imposed by burn certifications and other aircraft regulations. Joe wanted Geaux Aire to feel like their airplane, so Melinda's input and agreement were important throughout the process. Paul even custom-cut and fabricated the foam support in Melinda's seat to fit her perfectly.

The result is polished, but not flashy. Personal, but still practical and FAA-compliant.

For Joe, that was always the point. This was never about creating a showpiece for admiration on the ramp, he said. It was about creating the right airplane for the life he and Melinda live. The Herrings said they pay close attention to detail in all aspects of their lives, and the Geaux Aire refurbishment was no exception.

"I didn't manage this myself to save money," he said. "I enjoyed the complexity of the project, and I wanted it done precisely to our expectations. The conflicts along the way didn't discourage me for long. I enjoyed figuring out why a problem arose and how we could solve it. I'm not afraid to pick up the phone, call people with experience and expertise, and ask lots of questions. I learned a lot through the process."

Lessons learned from the refurb

The process reinforced what Joe now sees as the central truth of large refurbishment projects: Owners should expect them to take longer than expected or promised, require substantial time and attention and demand more follow-through than they may initially imagine.

"It wasn't one delay," he said. "It was one delay after another. That's the part anyone considering a King Air restoration needs to understand. Even when everyone means well, these projects will stretch. There will be surprises and there will be excuses."

Joe advises other owners to check references carefully, especially for paint, avionics and interior work; to build extra time into every stage of the schedule; and to be honest with themselves about whether they want to manage a project of this size and complexity.

"If you don't have patience, hire someone else to manage your project," he said. "And if you're not curious about learning new things or comfortable managing conflict and relationships with sometimes quirky mechanic-artist types who may not communicate well or manage to timelines, don't try to do it yourself."



Knowing all of this, he said he would do it again. The family has thoroughly enjoyed the airplane in the months since completion, and Joe said that early use has only reinforced the value of taking the time to get it right.

Joe shared these key takeaways from his experience:

- Plan for the work to take considerably longer than promised.
 - Check references carefully, especially for paint, avionics and interior shops. A small delay in this early phase is worth it because owners will be heavily dependent on the people they select. It is virtually impossible to move a disassembled airplane to another shop if things go badly.
 - Be very specific in the work order and in setting expectations.
 - Expect many follow-up conversations and visits back to the shop – even after delivery – for squawks, adjustments and punch list items. When possible, proximity helps. Geaux Aire has already been back to one shop or another five times. While the repairs are generally covered under warranty, the travel costs associated with getting the plane to and from the shop are not insignificant.
 - Use fixed-price agreements where appropriate to protect against timeline overruns.
- Stay closely involved, or hire someone qualified to manage the project for you. King Air maintenance shops are incredibly busy, experienced mechanics are aging out and general aviation is growing faster than new mechanics are being trained.
 - Be careful when selecting a vendor for ceramic coating. It is an evolving industry, full of unfamiliar jargon, variable application processes and wildly inconsistent pricing.
 - Focus on building the airplane that fits your mission, not someone else's idea of the perfect aircraft.

He said involving his wife in the design aspects and making it a family adventure became a meaningful part of the process, and the Herrings feel they left nothing on the table.

"It was a long and often frustrating process, but it was fun and rewarding too," Joe said. "We learned so much about the airplane, met craftsmen we now consider friends and ended up with something that was custom-made for us. She's a really pretty bird that cruises at 300 knots. Every time we board the plane, we smile from ear to ear. We remember every carefully considered decision and the good folks who helped us along the way." **KA**

Garmin Expands Guided Visual Approaches Database

Garmin has added 15 new approaches and 10 new airports – Long Beach, California (KLGB), and San Jose, California (KSJC), among others – to the Guided Visual Approaches database designed in collaboration with Hughes Aerospace and offered for purchase through *flyGarmin.com*.

The new additions bring the total to 46 visual approaches in 36 challenging airport environments for the growing database that provides lateral and vertical guidance for pilots (not approved for use in instrument meteorologic conditions). To view the whole list, visit Garmin.com/GuidedVisuals.

“Guided visuals enhance approach safety by enabling more stabilized visual approaches in faster turbine aircraft, especially when flying into airports in areas of higher terrain and obstacles,” Garmin said in a news release. “Guided visuals also aid pilots flying visual approaches into airports surrounded by cityscapes and lights at night, making it easier to stay in visual contact with the runway.”

The guided visuals are compatible with Garmin WAAS-equipped avionics capable of RF legs, such as the GTN and GTN Xi series navigators, and select Garmin integrated flight decks. Pilots will experience a similar look and feel as traditional approaches from the



A sample from Garmin’s Guided Visual Approaches database.

time they load guided visuals into the avionics all the way to flying them to the runway. The visual approaches can be flown coupled to the autopilot, allowing pilots to focus their attention outside the airplane. Additionally, each approach has a georeferenced approach chart available that can be accessed like traditional Garmin FliteCharts. *Source: garmin.com/aviation*

Banyan Adds King Air Maintenance at KSGJ

Banyan Air Service has expanded its maintenance, repair and overhaul footprint in Florida by adding King Air 90 and 200 maintenance and service at its satellite facility at

Northeast Florida Regional Airport in St. Augustine (KSGJ).

“We’re excited to continue growing our maintenance capabilities in St. Augustine and to welcome King Air aircraft into the facility while continuing our support of the HondaJet and Pilatus PC-12 platforms,” VP/Director of MRO Services Charlie Amento said in a news release. “This location allows us to better support operators in North Florida and beyond while maintaining the same standards of quality and expertise Banyan is known for.”

The KSGJ site supports King Air, PC-12 and HondaJet aircraft with

inspections, modifications, avionics support, AOG assistance and heavy maintenance services that complement Banyan's flagship Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport (KFYE) MRO operation.

King Air operators interested in scheduling maintenance at KSGJ should contact Curtis Florio, facility manager, at cflorio@banyanair.com or 904-506-6902. For pricing and facility quotes, contact Eric Smith with Banyan Technical Sales at esmith@banyanair.com. Source: banyanair.com

Blackhawk Expands Into Alaska With Sixth Location

The Blackhawk Group announced in January that it had acquired Silver Sky Aviation of Wasilla, Alaska. Blackhawk will rebrand the facility as the sixth location of its network of Blackhawk Performance Centers. Silver Sky brings extensive experience supporting Beechcraft King Air, Cessna Caravan, Daher Kodiak and Pilatus PC-12 platforms, including multiple Blackhawk and Finnoff performance conversions.

Silver Sky is an authorized service center for Caravan and Kodiak aircraft, expanding OEM-backed service and support options available through the Blackhawk network. Blackhawk – offering turboprop performance solutions including engine, propeller and avionics upgrades – said in a news release that Alaska has seen significant growth in turboprop operations due to the combination of a turbine-powered aircraft's range, speed and payload with

the reliability required to operate in harsh, cold-weather environments.

Source: blackhawk.aero

Garmin Adds Integrations To Automate Aircraft Flight Logging With PlaneSync

Garmin has added three new integrations for its flyGarmin aircraft flight logs that when coupled with a PlaneSync subscription allow aircraft owners to get the most out of the data their avionics collect every flight.

Brazos Safety Systems, Navi and Jet-Care have joined the growing list of aircraft analysis services enabling pilots to automatically share aircraft flight logs from their Garmin avionics and receive customized reports on engine health, maintenance updates, flight analysis and more.

Compatible Garmin avionics can collect a wealth of information from startup to shut down on each flight. When appropriately

equipped, an aircraft flight log can include GPS track, attitude information, engine data, aircraft total time, departure time, CO levels and more. After a flight, the data can be automatically uploaded to flyGarmin.com via the GDL 60 datalink and PlaneSync service or transferred from compatible avionics via the Flight Stream 510 wireless gateway and Garmin Pilot app. Aircraft owners can review flights, playback data and more.

With new flyGarmin.com integrations, aircraft owners can now opt-in to share their flight logs automatically with many different service providers. Examples include aircraft and flight analysis, engine performance and trend analysis, aircraft record keeping and maintenance services, aircraft scheduling and more.

Brazos Safety Systems offers flight data monitoring and flight operations quality assurance services. Navi analyzes in-flight



Garmin announced new flyGarmin.com integrations.

audio and avionics data for real-time insights and post-flight analysis. Jet-Care offers turbine engine operators an analysis of engine trend data against in-house models to identify performance issues and detect engine core deterioration. *Source: garmin.com/aviation*

Raisbeck Secures Worldwide Rights to Metrea STCs

Raisbeck Engineering recently announced it has expanded its aftermarket portfolio of certified aircraft performance solutions by securing exclusive global rights to supplemental type certificates held by Metrea, a provider of effects-as-a-service to national security partners. Raisbeck said this partnership will strengthen how it supports Beechcraft King Air, Cessna Caravan and Twin Commander operators worldwide.

“Metrea’s STCs are highly complementary to our existing portfolio and through this agreement, we are ensuring that these proven technologies remain available and well-supported for operators around the world,” Gregory Davis, president of Raisbeck Engineering, said in a news release.

Raisbeck has exclusive rights to market, sell and support Metrea STCs across its global network of OEM and MRO partners. These include landing-gear seal upgrades, engine stacks, tire options, weight increases, cargo compartments, camera/sight ports that enhance operational efficiency, mission

capability, and aircraft value across commercial, military and special mission platforms. *Source: raisbeck.com*

Cleveland Wheel & Brake Systems Expands Distribution

Cleveland Wheel & Brake Systems has added Airpart Supply Ltd. and Boeing Distribution, Inc. as preferred distributors and CJ Aerospace Pty. Ltd. and Southern Cross Aviation, LLC as authorized distributors. The distributors will sell the Ohio-based manufacturer’s lines of aircraft wheel and brake assemblies, hydraulic products and general aviation wheel and brake conversion kits directly to recreational pilots, aircraft mechanics, flight schools and FBO customers. *Source: clevelandwheelandbrake.com*

Blackhawk, Hartzell 350 Engine-Prop Upgrade STC’d

The Federal Aviation Administration has approved a supplemental type certificate for The Blackhawk Group to integrate Hartzell 5-blade composite propellers on its King Air 350 XP67A Engine+ upgrade.

The modification replaces stock Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A-60A engines with 1,200-shp PT6A-67A powerplants. Hartzell’s 5-blade composite propeller sheds approximately 10 pounds per side of the aircraft compared to standard 4-blade aluminum propellers, and a smaller diameter lowers cabin and exterior noise.

The combination provides a 24% increase in available horsepower, according to Blackhawk, which adds that operators can expect improved



The FAA approved Blackhawk’s STC to integrate Hartzell 5-blade composite propellers on its King Air 350 XP67A Engine+ upgrade.



Garmin's new facility at KIWA.

performance including cruise speeds exceeding 337 knots and climbs to FL350 in fewer than 18 minutes. *Source: blackhawk.aero*

Garmin Opens Facility at KIWA

Garmin has acquired a hangar and office complex at the Mesa Gateway Airport (KIWA) in Mesa, Arizona, to support the company's growing aviation business, including expanding aircraft certification and flight test capabilities.

"We are excited to add another aviation facility to our business," Executive Vice President and Managing Director of Aviation Phil Straub said in a news release. "The capabilities this location will provide are instrumental in extending aircraft airworthiness approvals

and market coverage for our product lines."

The facility consists of two adjacent hangars of roughly 75,000 total square feet that has office space for nearly 75 associates. KIWA has three parallel runways, two of which are more than 10,000 feet in length. Garmin said this overall infrastructure, along with generally clear weather throughout the year, provides an ideal flight operations setting. This new location joins Garmin's two existing flight operations centers in New Century, Kansas, and Salem, Oregon.


The Phoenix area has served as a Garmin engineering hub for over 25 years, initially with a facility in Tempe and later moving to a larger facility in Chandler. More recently, Garmin expanded its footprint to

Scottsdale after acquiring AeroData in 2019. The proximity of these locations provides support and infrastructure as Garmin continues to grow. *Source: garmin.com/aviation*

Textron Aviation Seeks Aircraft, Donations to Support 2026 Special Olympics Airlift

Textron Aviation launched a donation campaign benefitting Special Olympics in support of the 2026 Special Olympics Airlift, a nationwide effort that brings athletes and coaches to the Special Olympics USA Games through the generosity of volunteer pilots, aircraft owners and operators known as Doves. Financial contributions go directly to the Special Olympics, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

The donation campaign is new for the 2026 event and contributions provide essentials that make the athletes' journey easier, from comfort items for long travel days to operational support that keeps this 10-hour, coast-to-coast effort running seamlessly, the company said in a news release.

While the financial donation effort is now underway, Textron Aviation said in the March news release that it continues to call for Beechcraft, Cessna and Hawker owners to transport athletes to Minnesota's St. Paul Downtown Airport Holman Field (KSTP) on Friday, June 19 and return to take them home on Saturday, June 27. Visit airlift.txtav.com to learn more about supporting the airlift. *Source: textronaviation.com* 

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 jenna.reid@vpdcs.com

2026 GENERAL AVIATION INDUSTRY EVENTS



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- **April 14-19:** SUN 'n FUN Aerospace Expo, Lakeland, Florida
- **April 22-25:** AERO Friedrichshafen, Friedrichshafen, Germany
- **April 23-26:** Beech Bash in the Bluegrass, Madisonville, Kentucky
- **May 2-3:** Great Alaska Aviation Gathering, Anchorage, Alaska
- **June 2-4:** European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (EBACE), Geneva, Switzerland
- **June 19 & 27:** Textron Aviation Special Olympics Airlift, across the U.S.
- **July 20-26:** EAA AirVenture, Oshkosh, Wisconsin
- **Aug. 4-6:** Latin American Business Aviation Conference & Exhibition (LABACE), São Paulo, Brazil
- **Sept. 19-20:** National Championship Air Races, Roswell, New Mexico
- **Oct. 8-10:** Beech Party, Tullahoma, Tennessee
- **Oct. 20-22:** National Business Aviation Association Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (NBAA-BACE), Las Vegas, Nevada

Let us know of additional events at
melinda@kingairmagazine.com



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