

PILOT BRIEFING

COMPILED BY NATHAN A. FERGUSON

Things are cracking at testing lab

Sometimes aircraft manufacturers will go to extremes to learn something. Cirrus Design became famous for dropping 3,600-pound pallets out of the back of a military transport airplane to test its airframe parachute system. Now Liberty Aerospace has intentionally manufactured composite parts that contain defects.

Liberty has requested testing to determine how long the aircraft will remain safe and flyable while encountering various composite delaminations, according to the National Institute for Aviation Research's (NIAR) newsletter. The airplane is built from a combination of composite and metal parts. It uses a steel-tube chassis that contains the landing gear and serves as a mount for the fuselage

and aluminum wings. Carbon-fiber panels give it an aerodynamic and lightweight shape.

The testing is being conducted at NIAR's structural testing lab in Wichita, where the aircraft will be inspected every tenth of a lifetime for crack growth. The tests began in mid-July and will continue until the airplane has sustained 15,000 simulated flight hours. The results will help the company develop guidelines for Liberty XL2 maintenance manuals.

The full-scale testing lab provides a level of testing that not many aircraft manufacturers can afford on their own. Raytheon was the lab's original launch customer and has tested its entire product line there.



Oshkosh mystery unveiled

Three letters—PSQ—appeared in the blue skies on a Friday morning during EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2006. Confused? Turns out sky-writer Suzanne Asbury-Oliver drew the mile-high letters. They stood for "Painless, Safer, Quieter," a tagline used by Oregon Aero to represent its products line, designed to make pilots more comfortable.

i From topics such as Cessna's proof-of-concept light sport airplane to the Eclipse 500 jet certification, see our enhanced Oshkosh coverage on AOPA Online (www.aopa.org/oshkosh06). You'll find news stories, photos, and special features from the event.

