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## The Airframe

**S**OMEONE ONCE SAID, “DON’T MEET TROUBLE HALFWAY; IT IS QUITE capable of making the entire journey.” So it can be said for maintaining an aircraft. Owning and operating an aircraft is in no stretch of the imagination inexpensive. The time and money you spend on preventive and routine maintenance, as well as conducting a thorough preflight inspection before every flight, can be substantial, but the long-term payoff is a safer airplane with lower overall maintenance costs.

### THE PREFLIGHT INSPECTION

It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of a thorough preflight prior to every flight, and that definitely includes an exterior airframe inspection. I have observed pilots on countless occasions using a checklist to do the cockpit checks but not using it for the exterior portion of the preflight. When I’ve asked them why, I’ve never had a single pilot give me a good reason for eliminating the use of the checklist on the walkaround preflight.

As tedious as it may be, using a checklist will guarantee that every item is inspected. But realistically, few civilian pilots will actually pull out the checklist and conduct an exterior preflight inspection. Therefore, if you are going to ignore the safest practice, it is essential to at least conduct every walkaround inspection in exactly the same manner.