

Aircraft Valuation Factors Attorneys Should Know

Whitepaper by David Fisher

Aircraft Appraisal Expert -- Western Aviation / Sr. Aircraft Appraiser (ASA) / USPAP Compliant Reports

The Problem Attorneys Face

When aviation becomes part of a legal dispute—litigation, damage claims, dissolution, bankruptcy, or IRS matters—the value of the aircraft often becomes a point of contention. Yet aircraft are unlike typical assets. They depreciate differently, are modified frequently, and operate in an environment with strict regulatory oversight.

Attorneys need clarity, credibility, and defensible valuation data. Without it, cases stall, opposing counsel challenges every number, and outcomes become uncertain.

That's where a qualified aircraft appraiser makes the difference.

The Guide Your Case Needs

I'm David Fisher, Senior Aircraft Appraiser (ASA) with Western Aviation. For years I've supported attorneys, aircraft owners, lenders, and insurers with **USPAP-compliant, litigation-ready valuation reports**.

My role is simple: **Provide accurate, supportable aircraft values attorneys can rely on in court.**

Below are the key factors that impact aircraft value—and why they matter legally.

1. Airframe Total Time (AFTT)

Aircraft accumulate time like vehicles accumulate mileage.

Higher time = lower value.

But nuance matters.

- Two aircraft with similar hours may differ widely in condition.
- Gaps or inconsistencies in logbooks can reduce value—even if hours are low.
- Times on critical components (landing gear, control surfaces, pressurization cycles) may be more important than total time alone.

Legal relevance: AFTT discrepancies can expose maintenance negligence, misrepresentation, or breach of contract.

2. Engine & APU Status

Engines often represent up to **60% of the total aircraft value**.

Key considerations:

- Time Since New (TSN)
- Time Since Overhaul (TSO)
- Remaining time to next Hot Section Inspection (HSI)
- Engine program enrollment (e.g., JSSI, ESP, MSP)

Legal relevance: Incorrect engine assumptions can swing valuation by millions—especially in damage claims or divorce settlements.

3. Maintenance Programs & Compliance

Aircraft value increases when enrolled in reputable maintenance programs. It decreases significantly when maintenance is deferred or missing.

Important factors:

- Part 91 vs Part 135 usage
- Whether manufacturer service bulletins are complied with
- Airworthiness Directive (AD) compliance
- Scheduled inspections (A/B/C/D checks, phase inspections)

Legal relevance: Noncompliance can affect liability, insurance recoveries, and diminution-of-value claims.

4. Avionics, Technology, and Upgrades

Modern avionics (ADS-B Out, WAAS/LPV capability, glass cockpits) materially affect value. Outdated systems may require costly upgrades or reduce marketability.

Legal relevance: Avionics deficiencies may undermine aircraft usability, regulatory compliance, and damage assessments.

5. Interior & Exterior Condition

Cosmetics do not determine airworthiness, but they do impact perceived and actual value.

Factors include:

- Interior refurbishment date
- Cabinetry style and materials
- Configuration (10-seat vs 8-seat layouts)
- Paint condition and age
- Evidence of water intrusion, corrosion, or abuse

Legal relevance: Condition findings often support claims of improper storage, misuse, or breach of operating agreements.

6. Market Conditions

Aircraft markets fluctuate rapidly based on:

- Global demand
- Interest rates
- Fuel prices
- OEM production delays
- Seasonality

An accurate appraisal must reflect **current** market dynamics—not outdated book values or seller estimates.

Legal relevance: Market timing is critical when calculating fair market value, replacement value, or diminution of value.

7. Damage History & Event Records

Not all damage is equal.

A well-repaired incident may have minor impact; structural repairs may reduce value significantly.

Relevant documentation:

- NTSB/FAA reports
- Repair station logs
- Photographic evidence
- Parts traceability

Legal relevance: Damage history frequently becomes central in fraud cases, insurance disputes, and buyer/seller litigation.

8. Logbooks & Documentation

In aircraft valuation, documentation is value.

Missing, incomplete, or altered logbooks can reduce value by **20–40%** or more.

Legal relevance: Documentation gaps often establish negligence, misrepresentation, or failure to disclose.

What Attorneys Gain from an Expert Aircraft Appraiser

- **USPAP-compliant reports** suitable for court
- **Independent, defensible valuations**
- **Expert witness testimony** that translates technical aviation details into plain English
- **Support for discovery, depositions, and trial preparation**
- **Clear explanation of complex maintenance, regulatory, and market factors**

With the right expert, aircraft data stops being a liability and becomes a strategic advantage.

Conclusion

Attorneys don't need to be aviation experts—**they just need one on their side.**

Aircraft valuation is technical, nuanced, and requires deep industry knowledge to stand up under legal scrutiny.

When the value of an aircraft becomes a legal issue, the right appraiser ensures your case is backed by credible, defensible, and transparent valuation data.



David Fisher

Owner | Western Aviation

Sr. Accredited Appraiser with the American Society of Appraisers (ASA).

All appraisal reports are USPAP compliant.

[Book a FREE consultation today!](#)

WESTERN AVIATION

*Aircraft/Helicopter - Sales/Leases - All Aviation Appraisals -
Worldwide Charter Service + Charter Card*

7055 Old Katy Road, Houston, TX 77024

m: +1(281) 794-2361

o: 1 (800) AVIATION | +1 (281) 391-2510

e: david@westernaviation.com

