

Attorney Guide to Evaluating Aircraft Appraisals

Whitepaper by David Fisher

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When an Aircraft Appraisal Enters the Legal Arena, Scrutiny Follows

In litigation, the strength of an aircraft appraisal can influence settlement value, negotiation leverage, and courtroom outcomes. Yet many appraisals used in disputes are incomplete, unsupported, or prepared by individuals without the credentials needed for court.

Attorneys don't need to be aviation experts— **they simply need to know how to recognize a reliable appraisal.**

This guide highlights the essentials every attorney should evaluate.

1. Appraiser Qualifications

Not all "aircraft appraisers" are qualified for litigation.

A credible aviation expert should have:

- **ASA designation (Aircraft Specialty)**
- **USPAP-compliant methodology**
- **Documented experience with aircraft valuation in litigation**
- **Ability to testify clearly under cross-examination**

If credentials are vague or missing, the appraisal is already vulnerable.

2. Clarity of the Assignment & Definition of Value

Appraisals must clearly state:

- The **purpose** (litigation, damages, IRS, ownership dispute, etc.)
- The **effective date** of value
- The **definition of value** (Fair Market, Diminution, Replacement Cost, etc.)

If these elements are absent or unclear, opposing counsel will use it against the report.

3. Documentation Review & Verification

A strong appraisal should analyze—and verify:

- Complete aircraft logbooks
- Maintenance records and inspection status
- Airworthiness Directive (AD) compliance
- Engine times, cycles, and program enrollment
- Damage history, repairs, and OEM standards

Missing documentation analysis is a major red flag.

4. Methodology & Approach

USPAP requires sound methodology and transparent reasoning.

A litigation-ready appraisal should:

- Use recognized approaches (market, cost, and/or income)
- Explain adjustments clearly
- Support conclusions with verifiable data
- Reconcile all approaches in a defensible manner

If adjustments are vague, unsupported, or arbitrary, the valuation weakens.

5. Market Data Credibility

A proper appraisal includes:

- Current and historical comparable sales
- Verified market intelligence
- Adjustments tied to condition, equipment, and time of sale
- Discussion of market trends on the appraisal date

If the report relies on generic price guides without market evidence, it's not litigation-grade.

6. Treatment of Damage, Maintenance, and Condition

Aircraft value is heavily influenced by:

- Structural vs cosmetic damage
- Quality of repairs
- Deferred maintenance
- Avionics compliance
- Interior and exterior condition

The appraiser must quantify—not just mention—these impacts.

7. Internal Consistency & Cross-Examination Readiness

A valid appraisal should withstand pressure.

Ask:

- Are all numbers consistent throughout the report?
- Are data sources cited?
- Could the appraiser defend each adjustment under cross?
- Does the logic remain consistent even under alternative assumptions?

Weak internal logic usually signals a weak witness.

What Attorneys Gain With the Right Aircraft Appraisal Expert

- **Court-ready, USPAP-compliant valuations**
 - **Clear testimony that withstands cross-examination**
 - **Assistance interpreting records, maintenance logs, and AD compliance**
 - **Rebuttal analysis of opposing expert reports**
 - **A trusted guide through complex aviation details**
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Conclusion

A strong aircraft appraisal is more than a number—it's a defensible analysis that can influence the outcome of a case. By understanding what to look for, attorneys can quickly identify weak reports and rely on experts who deliver clarity, accuracy, and courtroom-proven methodology.

When the stakes involve an aircraft, the right expert protects your client and strengthens your case.



David Fisher

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

All appraisal reports are USPAP compliant.

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