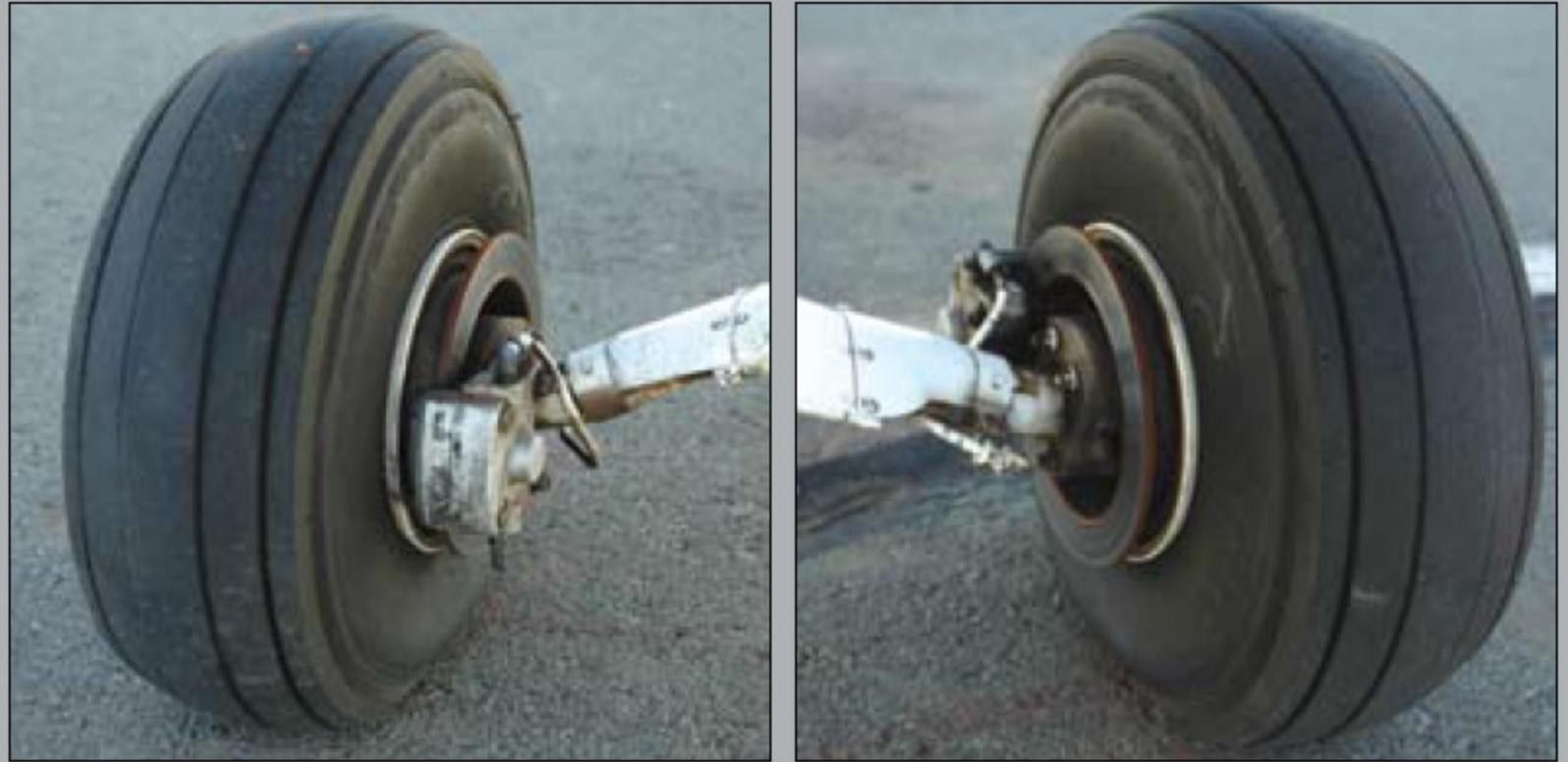


## Giving Your Brakes A Close Look

The best way to avoid joining the NTSB rolls due to a brake malfunction or mishap is to conduct a thorough preflight inspection and use the brakes as little as possible. Some other tips include:

- Visually inspect the brakes on the ground before each flight, looking for signs of unusual wear or overheating. If your plane is fitted with wheel pants, consider removing them. If you keep the pants on, and you operate out of what you would consider a short field, consider having your brakes inspected by a mechanic more frequently than is recommended by the manufacturer.
- Brake pads should be at least as thick as a nickel, and discs should not have any bluish tint. If the plane has sits for a few days, some rust may develop on the surface of the disc but this is normal and will wear off as soon as you apply the brakes after beginning to taxi.
- The caliper should feel slightly loose, and the surface of the disc should show no signs of pitting or bluish discoloration, which could indicate previous overheating.
- Any evidence of brake fluid on the ground or airplane, especially underneath the brake, should be investigated before further flight. Enough fluid could have leaked to admit air into the system, making for mushy brakes. Also, aircraft brake fluid is flammable, as at least one Cirrus pilot has discovered.
- Check braking action as soon as you begin rolling and if you are flying with someone in the right seat, ask that person to check the brake pedals on their side as well. If the airplane seems to pull to one side or the other, abort the mission and have the brakes inspected before you fly. If one side were to seize during landing, it could lead to an excursion off the runway.
- Avoid taxiing through standing water or damp grass immediately after applying brakes. The hot metal can crack if it suddenly comes into contact with the cool water.



*When everything is out in the breeze, preflighting this Cessna Skyhawk's right main wheel, tire and brake are much simpler. If you own the airplane, consider removing its wheel-pants in winter to help prevent snow and slush from accumulating and adding weight or literally freezing the tire. Leaving them off in the summer, when operating to/from a grass strip, isn't a bad idea, either. And if this is your airplane, it's time to either switch this wheel/tire with the other side or turn it around to prevent further uneven wear.*