

Various patterns involving how an aircraft is flown, stored and maintained may accelerate airframe fatigue:

USE PATTERNS

- Instructional use
- Aerobatics (approved or otherwise)
- Mountain flying
- Extended low-altitude flight
- Frequent turbulence encounters
- Long periods of inactivity
- Operation at or above the original maximum weight

STORAGE PATTERNS

- Hangared in musty environments, or tied down outside
- Average humidity at home base
- Salt air
- Animal infestation
- Ultraviolet exposure (especially with composites)

MAINTENANCE PATTERNS

- Delayed or deferred squawks
- Scratched or chipped paint (promotes corrosion)
- Plugged wing and fuselage drain holes
- Mechanics not expert on the model



AOPA'S AGING AIRCRAFT COURSE

Created in concert with aircraft type clubs, AOPA's Air Safety Foundation offers an interactive, online course to educate pilots, mechanics and owners to issues affecting airplanes as they accumulate exposure to fatigue. The program teaches factors that accelerate fatigue, with special emphasis on corrosion and its effects. Optional breakout sessions focus on issues specific to Cessna, Beechcraft, Piper and Mooney, and information developed by experts from each type's owners group.

Introduced in October 2007, the AOPA ASF course is an excellent, free introduction to issues affecting those who own, fly and maintain older aircraft. Completion counts toward a level of FAA WINGS.

The course, along with other valuable multimedia training, is available at www.aopa.org/asf/online_courses/.

