



Approval for Return to Service

The General Aviation Joint Steering Committee (GAJSC) has identified a number of fatal general aviation accidents caused by flying in an aircraft that is undergoing maintenance and is not approved for return to service. Before you take or fly an aircraft, always check for the signed, Approval for Return to Service entry in the aircraft’s logbook.

Most aircraft owners are up to speed on the status of their aircraft, and rental fleets usually have aircraft status boards or squawk sheets to check for problems with an airplane, but nevertheless some pilots take, or attempt to fly, an airplane that is undergoing maintenance or is not ready to be returned to service.

Always Check the Logbook

Never assume that an aircraft is ready to fly. For example, if your mechanic tells you that the repairs are done on your aircraft and that all the work is documented on the work order, does that mean your aircraft is ready to fly? How about when that big, red “Do Not Fly” sign is no longer hanging on the yoke — does that mean your aircraft is approved for flight? In all of these cases, the answer is — absolutely not.

You have to check the aircraft’s logbook first. Do not take an airplane until you have seen the signed, Approval for Return to Service entry in the aircraft’s logbook.

Signed, Sealed, Approved — It’s Yours

An Approval for Return to Service is a documentation in your aircraft’s logbook with the signature and certificate number of the person

approving your aircraft for return to service. It is a written certification that tells you whether or not the aircraft is airworthy and ready to fly.

Per 14 CFR section 43.9, any person who performs maintenance, repairs, or alterations on an aircraft shall make an entry in the maintenance record with the following information:

- 1) A description of the work performed,
- 2) The date the work was completed,
- 3) The name of the person who performed the work, and
- 4) The signature and certificate number of the person approving the work.

DATE	ENGINE MAINTENANCE RECORD DESCRIPTION OF WORK PERFORMED	SIGNATURE
04/21/98	1. Changed oil. Added 8 Quarts of Aeroshell	
Aircraft TT 2,762 Hrs.	50wt. compounded Oil.	
SMOH 962 Hrs.	2. Removed & Inspected oil screen and re-installed in accordance with Lycoming service manual.	
		<i>Ima B. Good</i>
		Ima B. Good A&P 123456789

The signature and certificate number make up the Approval for Return to Service.

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Keep in mind that the Approval for Return to Service is only for the work performed. Make sure that all the required inspections have been completed and logged.

After an inspection, your maintenance record entry should contain:

- 1) A certification statement such as: —*“I certify that this aircraft has been inspected in accordance with XYZ inspection and was determined to be in airworthy condition.”*
- 2) The date of the inspection,
- 3) The aircraft total time in service, and
- 4) The signature, certificate number, and kind of certificate held by the person approving return to service.

AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE RECORD		
DATE	DESCRIPTION OF WORK PERFORMED	SIGNATURE
01/21/99	Total Time 1743.8 Hours	
	I certify that this aircraft has been inspected in accordance with (insert type) inspection and was determined to be in airworthy condition.	
		<i>Ima B. Good</i>
		Ima B. Good A&P 123456789

You should see this for every inspection. Again, the signature and certificate number represent your Approval for Return to Service.

Inspect the Aircraft

It’s always a good idea to do an **advanced** preflight on aircraft that has been returned to service. Your advanced preflight should start with the aircraft documentation. Make sure the maintenance work has been documented in the appropriate aircraft log book, and check that the aircraft has been returned to service. Note that if the aircraft was test flown, there may be a discrepancy between the

logbook time and what you see on the panel. Take your time looking the aircraft over.

- ⇒ Use a checklist to make sure you don’t miss anything.
- ⇒ Pay particular attention to the areas that were worked on including any disconnections that may have been required to access the parts that were serviced.
- ⇒ Special attention should be paid to things like oil leaks and loose fasteners.
- ⇒ For the first flight, stay in the pattern within gliding distance of your runway.



It is Your Responsibility

As the aircraft owner/operator, it is your responsibility to ensure that maintenance personnel make the appropriate entries in the aircraft logbook.

Proper logbook entries that detail the work completed not only keep you up to speed on the condition of your aircraft, but they also serve as an important factor in maintaining the airworthiness and long term value of your airplane.

As a best practice, always check the logbooks after an aircraft is returned from maintenance. And before you take or fly that aircraft, always look for the signed, Approval for Return to Service entry. That way you’ll know that your aircraft is ready to fly.

Resources

- Advisory Circular 43-9C, *Maintenance Records*: <https://go.usa.gov/xmXRp>
- NTSB Safety Alert — Advanced Preflight After Maintenance: <http://go.usa.gov/ck7Py>
- Fact Sheet on Advanced Preflight After Maintenance: <http://go.usa.gov/xmgMx>
- “Advanced Preflight,” *FAA Safety Briefing*, Mar/Apr 2012: <http://go.usa.gov/ck7ma>

