



Malibu-Mirage Owners & Pilots Association

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Re: Follow up information on SB 1103E (Matrix/Mirage Engine Mount)

On June 5, 2014 Piper issued revision E of their mandatory Service Bulletin 1103 which announced a new replacement engine mount (P/N 89137-043) for the Mirage and Matrix. This new mount design eliminates the previous recurring inspection. For prior revision engine mounts, this SB also reduces the time for the recurring 100-hour inspections to begin to 200 hours time in service.

SB 1103E provides a no-charge in-warranty replacement, including parts and labor, for aircraft within Piper's two-year warranty period as of June 5, 2014. Owners of in-warranty aircraft are required to contact their Piper Service Center and place their order for a replacement mount by September 3, 2014 to qualify. The actual installation does not have to occur by that date, only the order. It is MMOPA's position that every qualifying aircraft should have this no-charge replacement installed.

For out-of-warranty aircraft, Piper issued a letter providing the opportunity to purchase a new replacement mount at a heavily discounted priced of \$5,772. The labor to remove and re-install the mount is at the owner's expense. For reference, the price for the prior revision mount (P/N 89137-042) was \$7,089. Note, December 1, 2014 is the deadline for ordering the new mount at this reduced price, after that the price will increase to somewhere north of the -042 price (over \$8,000 would be our guess).

There was a fairly active thread on the MMOPA forum about the many aspects of this SB and its impact on Matrix and Mirage aircraft owners. Since this engine mount has been an ongoing reliability and maintenance issue since 1989, the MMOPA Board felt the consideration by Piper for out-of-warranty aircraft should have been stronger.

On June 18th, your Board of Directors voted unanimously to authorize the MMOPA Ombudsman to initiate confidential discussions with Piper Aircraft to express our concerns about the compliance cost to our members who have out-of-warranty aircraft subject to SB 1103E. A letter summarizing the Association's point of view was delivered to Piper management June 20th with specific requests and recommendations for measures to soften the impact of this SB on our affected members. Since then, Jon Sisk has had discussions with Piper CEO, Simon Caldecott, which have improved the situation somewhat and provided some clarification and helpful insight into the situation. Here is a summary:

- The rate at which Piper has normally built engine mounts is completely inadequate for the large number that will be required for compliance with SB 1103E. There are approximately 120 in-warranty aircraft, but the number of mounts that will be required

for out-of-warranty aircraft must be determined by response from fleet owners. Owners have the option to continue with recurring inspections, or install the new replacement mount.

- The ordering deadlines of Sept 2nd for in-warranty no charge replacement and Dec 1st for out-of-warranty special pricing on the new mount is designed to gather the production requirements as quickly as possible so Piper can gear up appropriately.
- These deadlines are for ORDERING ONLY, not for payment or installation. It is expected that owners will want to coordinate this major work with other service events such as an annual inspection, engine OH, or nose landing gear work, to minimize the cost and disruption. So when the replacement mount is ordered, an estimated desired delivery schedule will be part of the process. No deposit, payment, or contract is required at the time of order.
- The special price of \$5,772 through Dec 1 for out-of-warranty aircraft was an estimate of Piper's actual cost to build based on existing tooling, processes and manpower. From Mr. Caldecott, "This cost is Piper's actual cost which included a special agreement with Piper's Parts Distribution Network whereby orders placed within the previously specified time scale did not include margin for any of the parties."
- Subsequent to our letter and discussions, "As a cost reduction challenge, Piper has re-examined the manufacturing costs and we are implementing a plan that includes additional tooling, manpower, and the creation of a dedicated manufacturing cell. This should enable Piper to further reduce the cost and we are prepared, based on receiving the no-deposit orders in the previously specified window, to reduce the price to \$4,500."
- Of particular concern was the issue of members who have purchased prior revisions of the engine mount in good faith and now find that a better solution is being offered without any warranty provision. While I have no specific remedy to report as a result of our negotiations, I do have this statement from Piper indicating their willingness to consider these situations. "Piper's Customer Support organization will continue to work with owners who have recently replaced their engine mounts. These owners should contact Piper's Customer Service team for review." To me, this means contacting Vincent Zarrella, Director of Customer Support at Piper Aircraft. His number is 772-299-2024.

I would also encourage our members to discuss this and any other Piper issues with them during their exhibitions at AirVenture Oshkosh and the 2014 MMOPA Convention in Bonita Springs.

Another question that has been asked on this subject is about the estimated labor time to properly perform the removal and reinstallation of the engine mount. Based upon an informal survey of a few of the leading PA 46 shops, we are able to provide the following guidance:

- These shops indicated, based upon their significant experience, that they would probably quote the engine mount replacement somewhere in the 50 to 70 hour range.
- The average came in around 60 hours but please recognize that every situation is unique, no one has experience with this specific new mount (although it should be similar to other mount replacements) and all who participated were providing information in an effort to provide MMOPA members with a "feel" for the replacement cost.

- Shops with more experience in engine mount replacement should be used because of the knowledge gained. This will keep hours down and you will benefit from their experience.
- The replacement cost quote should be at the low end of the range (or perhaps lower) if done in conjunction with other major work (eg., engine replacement) and could be at or above the high end if other problems were encountered/discovered during replacement (eg., exhaust removal often leads to other repair costs)
- It was generally felt that the 70 hours provided by Piper to in-warranty owners was fair and realistic.

Finally, there is the issue of what shop to use for the engine mount R&R? For in-warranty aircraft, Piper stipulates that the work must be accomplished by one of their Service Centers. Frankly, given the complexity of the work, that is exactly as it should be. For out-of-warranty R&R, we would encourage our members to use a Piper Service Center or a shop that has performed this “major surgery” on a PA46 many times in the past. There are simply too many opportunities to make subtle mistakes that can have a big impact on aircraft performance and reliability. Do not have this work done by your local A&P unless he is truly a recognized PA46 expert.

Your MMOPA Ombudsman and Board of Directors will continue to work constructively with Piper Aircraft and our other vendors to improve the value, utility, and safety of our PA46 fleet.

Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Sisk, Ombudsman
Tom Kieffer, President
Marty Doran, Executive Director