

Engine Info: Lifter Body Concerns Explored

First, a note of thanks to Steve Noyes for raising a potential issue in the overhaul of our O-470-11 and -15 engines (the Bark, October '16). Periodically, real or perceived shortages of engine parts raise concerns for the overhaul or servicing of Birddog engines. This most recent concern is the potential shortage of cam followers (lifter bodies) p/n 531128 (Superior Airparts equivalent: SA531128). One interpretation of Continental Service Bulletin SB97-6B is to require replacement of the hydraulic lifters with new or factory rebuilt units to qualify the rebuild as an overhaul. That interpretation seems to say without available new cam followers, major overhauls would not be possible.

Echoing Steve's concerns, I did a deep dive into the issue. A quick phone survey of overhaul shops resulted in several answers to the question: "For E-series engines and O-470-11 and -15 models, do you require replacement of the hydraulic lifters (and their followers) with new or factory rebuilt at overhaul and, if so, are followers – new or yellow-tagged – available?" Answers varied: "We don't overhaul any E-series engines (that includes our derivative O-470-11, -15 models) anymore;" to "We make sure the lifters meet dimensional and operating requirements;" "We use only new or yellow-tagged parts, including lifters;" and "We do replace them with new or overhauled units if the customer's lifters don't make specs. But they aren't factory-overhauled units."

When asked about Continental's SB97-6B, dated 11-18-2009 (you can find a copy here: <http://www.airmarkoverhaul.com/Continental%20SB97-6B%20Mandatory%20Replacement%20Parts.pdf>), several shops replied that the requirement for lifters' replacement with new or factory rebuilt units applies only to the GTSIO-520 engine(s) described in the last section's text. The original SB97-6 (04-07-1997) required hydraulic lifter replacement in all Continental engines. In fact, it was item #1 on the mandatory list. That onerous requirement was dropped in subsequent, superseding versions of SB-97 but was added to the GTSIO-520-specifics in SB97-6B (11-18-2009).

A few minutes' search resulted in finding four sources for p/n 531128 and SA531128 lifter bodies. As of this writing, the followers and/or complete lifter assemblies were available as new or tagged units from AeroBase Group, Aircraft Specialties, Airmark, and Preferred AirParts. There are undoubtedly others, too. Pricing varies widely, so it's worthwhile checking multiple sources. Interestingly, one source had a supply of new followers I(NOS) priced 30% less than the cost of others' yellow-tagged units.

If/As rumors of shortages circulate, we'll do our best to find sources. And, again, our thanks to Steve Noyes for raising the concern that prompted this deep dive into cam followers and lifter assemblies.

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