

Mooney M20A Model Guide

Mooney M20A is a four-seat, single-engine piston airplane built from 1955 to 1957. It belongs to the M20 family, whose later variants reach up to 222 kt cruise and 1050 nm range (family maxima, not M20A figures). The sources hold no M20A-specific speeds, weights or fuel data, so get the approved flight manual. The main buyer checks are the wood empennage, fuselage tube corrosion and landing gear rigging.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Four-seat piston single, built 1955-1957. No M20A-specific speed, weight or fuel figures are in the sources, so get the flight manual.
- Service Bulletin M20-170A covers M20 and M20A, all serial numbers: wood empennage inspection, with a metal empennage mandatory within one year.
- AD/M20/32 (Mooney SB M20-208B) targets fuselage tubular structure corrosion; insulation blankets can hide severe corrosion.
- Hartzell STC SA11888CH (two-blade composite propeller) lists M20A as an eligible model.

SAFETY NOTES

- SB M20-170A: do not fly the wood empennage unless inspected and reworked per the bulletin, or unless a metal empennage is installed.
- Corrosion in the fuselage tubular structure grounded an aircraft in an AD background report; remove cabin insulation blankets for inspection.
- Practice gear operation and warning-light checks. Gear-up landings were pilot error; collapses were maintenance issues.

WOOD EMPENNAGE HISTORY

SB M20-170A requires removing the fabric from the horizontal and vertical stabilizers and inspecting the wood skin and glue joints. Recurring inspections run at a 90 day interval, with a fuller 180 day inspection. A cracked fin spar was visible only after removing apparently good fabric. Ask for proof of a metal empennage or of bulletin compliance.

FUSELAGE STRUCTURE AND LANDING GEAR

AD/M20/32 Amdt 6 (Australian CASA) requires action per Mooney SB M20-208B Part A for models built before 1976. Severe corrosion was hidden by cabin insulation blankets. SB M20-344 says gear-up landings and gear collapses trace to pilot error or to improper rigging, lack of lubrication and worn parts. Check the Johnson bar gear, its warning lights and the rigging records.

EQUIPMENT AND UPGRADES

Hartzell STC SA11888CH replaces the installed constant-speed propeller with a two-blade composite unit. Mooney Service Instruction M20-116 offers an optional 406MHz ELT retrofit kit to replace the 121.5MHz ELT. It notes that the M20A has a different dorsal fin or none, so the antenna install needs a doubler.