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TCM quits dual magneto line

Posted by *Janice Wood* · April 8, 2010

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In a terse e-mail sent to customers and distributors Feb. 23, TCM said "effective today" it "will no longer accept orders for our dual magneto line including all harnesses and supporting parts."

TCM officials would not comment on its decision, instead saying that the e-mail sent to distributors "concludes all the information we have at this time."

"This is a very difficult decision and a decision that does not come easy to us," the e-mail said. "It is an action that we deeply regret, but cannot avoid. We are sorry for any inconvenience this will impose on our customers."

Industry sources estimate TCM's decision could impact about 20,000 engines, including some that power Piper Navajos, Seminoles, and Dakotas; Cessna Skyhawks, Skylanes and Cardinals; Beech Duchess; some Mooney models; Partenavia; and Enstrom helicopters.

While those numbers are alarming, industry experts estimate that only about 750 dual magneto overhauls are done each year.

Most affected by TCM's decision is its main competitor, Lycoming Engines.

"We're trying to work all the angles on this to ensure we can deliver new engines and service the fleet," said Michael Kraft, senior vice president and general manager of Lycoming, the main customer for the dual magneto line. "This is nothing that will shut us down."

Kraft notes that Lycoming is "exploring all alternatives" for new magnetos from other sources, but meanwhile, ordered as many new magnetos as it could before the deadline. New magnetos will be used for new engines, while Lycoming is identifying overhaul options for existing customers.

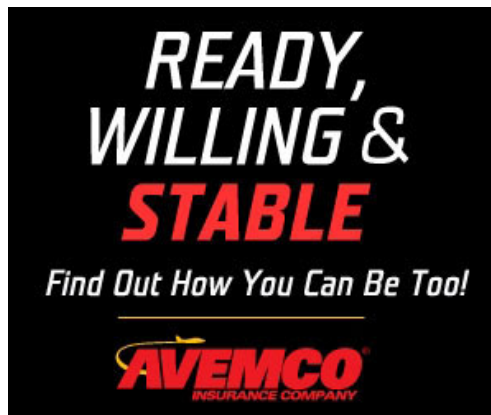
Kraft is quick to point out that airplane owners should not panic. "They should examine where they are in terms of the life of their engine and when they choose to overhaul or rebuild — while they won't be able to get new magnetos — magnetos will be available and they will be able to get parts."

Overhaul shops echo Kraft.

Quality Aircraft Accessories in Tulsa, Okla., which has been overhauling magnetos for more than 10 years, has reassured its customers that those overhauls will continue.

In fact, Brett Benton, the company's CEO and owner, sees this as a "strategic opportunity."

"There will be a void in the marketplace," he said, noting that as soon as he saw TCM's e-mail, he called the company to discuss taking over the line. "I was told 'we made a business decision to exit this business,' and I said, 'great, we made a business decision to enter this business. The market is not best served by not



doing anything," he continued.

His next call was to Tempest to discuss working on a PMA for the two components that are now only available from TCM: The impulse assembly and the block. (All other parts have been PMA'd by a variety of companies).

As soon as Tempest heard TCM's decision, it also approached TCM to acquire the line, said Stan Fletcher, Tempest Plus Marketing Group president. "We have not heard from them since that time, but they were not sure of what they would do with the line," he said.

Tempest has been busy finalizing its spark plug production — the company recently purchased Unison Industries' spark plug line — so, although Tempest has PMAs for many of the parts in the dual magneto, company officials have not put too much thought into pursuing PMAs for the other parts for the magneto, Fletcher said.

"Trying to get a PMA for any part is becoming difficult and taking longer to get, so we would have to really study the market before putting the resources into such a project," Fletcher said.

He added that aircraft owners may see a "sharp increase" in price for overhauled magnetos and harnesses.

"There is probably enough components available for the short term to supply the requirements," he said. "Long term is anyone's guess, but it would be our belief that a solution will be found. That is just the way America's aviation is."

Many in the industry believe that TCM will eventually sell the line to another company.

Until that time, Quality Aircraft Accessories' Benton says his company is "committed to repairing/overhauling all dual magnetos in two days. We will endeavor to match the distributor pricing structure TCM had in place, however, price and availability of the detail parts could affect the repair/overhaul price."

For more information: Lycoming.com, QualityAircraftAccessories.com, TempestPlus.com, GeniuneContinental.aero.

Why does Lycoming buy parts from TCM?

Some may wonder why Lycoming would buy such a critical part from its main competitor. It's because TCM holds the intellectual property and PMAs for the parts, which it acquired years ago when Bendix sold its magneto line to TCM.

"Lycoming was really the only customer for the magneto line," one industry source said. "Imagine how contentious it would be if Coca-Cola was making syrup for Pepsi."

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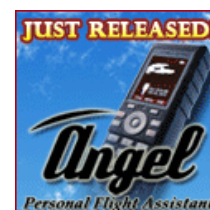
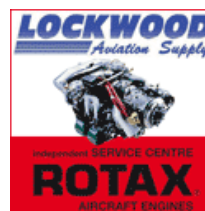
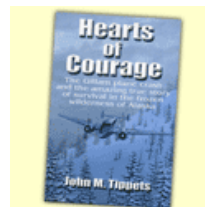
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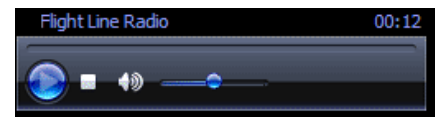
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










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