

Give me space

Hangar lifts double coverage



How would you like to cut your hangar rent in half? Or add a second airplane to your fleet without increasing your hangar costs?

Tom Crone already owned and flew a Grumman AA1B when he came across a beautifully restored Piper J-3 Cub that he very much wanted to buy. The question was where to put it.

Crone didn't want to leave either airplane outside, subject to the Mid-Atlantic heat, cold, wind, and rain. And a second hangar was unobtainable—both in terms of ongoing costs (\$400 a month) and a years-long waiting list.

Crone's answer was to buy a hangar lift that allowed him to keep both airplanes, protected, inside a single T-hangar.

In three years, Crone said he's already avoided enough additional expenses to cover the \$9,000 cost of the hydraulic lift

he purchased new from the manufacturer. The lift can accommodate nose- or tailwheel airplanes, and the Cub usually goes up in the winter and the Grumman in the summer. It takes about three minutes to fully raise or lower the lift.

Crone said the lift also comes in handy for maintenance. "It's great when you're doing wheel or brake work," he said. "You can clean and wax the belly of the airplane, and the bottom of the wings—areas that are hard to reach when the airplane is on the ground."

The lift has jack points that allow for hoisting an airplane and retracting the gear without crawling under the airplane. Crone said he has no concerns about the

lift failing. And neither, apparently, does his insurance carrier. It costs no more to insure an aircraft kept in a hangar with a lift than without one.

"I looked at the machine drawings before I bought the lift, and I have no concerns about its structural strength," Crone said. "Its drive shaft is extremely durable. It's not going to fail."

Marty Kononel, owner of Aero-Lift, a company that has manufactured hangar lifts since 2001, said there has never been a structural failure of any of his company's products. Aero-Lift is based in Tucson, Arizona, and the lifts are manufactured near Philadelphia.

The retail price for a new lift is about \$11,000, and lifts are sometimes available on the used market. Used lifts typically retain about 75 percent of their value.

Aero-Lifts have a maximum capacity of 2,500 pounds, so they are suitable for most single-engine airplanes up to a BE-36 Bonanza or Cirrus SR22. The lifts themselves weigh about 2,700 pounds, and they work best in hangars with a ceiling at least 16 feet above the ground.

About 400 Aero-Lifts have been sold in the last eight years. "They're popular among pilots who want to split hangar costs, or consolidate in one hangar," Kononel said. "They're also used extensively by owners of large, gang hangars as a way to increase revenue without adding more physical space."

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Here's a way to resist ever-rising hangar rents: put two airplanes in a single T-hangar. A hangar lift allows aircraft owners greater flexibility in storing their airplanes, or sharing existing hangars. The lifts don't affect insurance, and it takes about three minutes to fully raise or lower airplanes up to 2,500 pounds.