# CALLBACK

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# Preflight Peril and Prudence

The preflight inspection prior to flight is both a serious task and a solemn responsibility. Responsibility for lives and safe aircraft operations is obvious. The seriousness of the task arises with acknowledgment and acceptance of that responsibility. A deficient or substandard preflight may lead to an incident or an undesirable aircraft state, while an exemplary preflight can identify potential hazards that can then be managed to mitigate or prevent unwanted incidents.

This month, *CALLBACK* presents reported incidents that were directly influenced by their respective preflight inspections in either a positive or negative way. Note the human factors that affected each incident. Then identify characteristics, mindsets, and lessons that granted preflights exemplary status, and model your preflights accordingly.

## Part 91 – Prudent Observations

An observant, proactive Embraer 505 Captain embraced the aircraft's recent history and connected the dots to mitigate a potential airborne loss of control.

■ *Aircraft X was jet blasted by a Challenger 350 yesterday in ZZZ at the FBO. That crew in Aircraft X was about to start engines and experienced firsthand the violent jet blast. They wrote up the aircraft for an inspection, and it was inspected and signed off later yesterday afternoon. This morning, given the history of the aircraft, we felt it prudent to do a flight control check with each of us outside to observe the control surfaces. This is when we discovered the rudder making a loud, distinctive, clunking/binding noise with a lack of smooth travel moving in the pedals themselves. Another aircraft was parked next to us (another Phenom); we had that crew do a full rudder deflection. We noted no noise coming from this aircraft, and the difference was night and day compared to Aircraft X. I do not believe the engines were inspected, either, for FOD ingestion.*

## Part 91 – How Could This Happen?

During a routine preflight inspection, human factors and an inadvertent hazard resulted in an incident for this small transport pilot and the jumpers onboard. Lessons were learned and preventive measures were instituted.

■ *It was a normal morning of jump ops. The airplane was pulled out of the hanger by my manager, and the tow bar was accidentally left on the front nose gear. I did my normal preflight and walk-around and failed to notice the tow bar still attached to the plane. I plugged in the start cart… and climbed in through the rear door towards the cockpit. I completed a normal startup, and I began to taxi in front of coworkers, bystanders, and an FBO employee (no one noticed). At the end of the taxiway, I began a run-up and heard the slightest abnormal sound. I reduced the throttle, took my headset off, and ran up the RPM's again with normal sounds/indications. The jump door has a loud rattle, so that was my first assumption. I retarded the throttle and repeated one more time, each time with normal sounds and indications. I proceeded to taxi and take off and drop a load of jumpers. An airport employee found the tow bar about 1500' down the runway (where we must have rotated). The performance of the flight was completely normal, and after shutdown, we discovered the prop blade tips were damaged. There was no damage to any other property. I believe this is a classic example of confirmation bias. The plane had been pulled out plenty of times with the tow bar removed. The tow bar was a perfect color grey to blend in with the asphalt. Immediately after this incident, we spray painted the tow bar bright red and now have a designated spot so we can see it from the cockpit. We have attached a leash/carabiner so you cannot ever walk away from it while you are attached to it and using it. I now do an extra 360 walk-around before ever boarding an aircraft. I will continue to share the incident with many fellow pilots and future students. This is something that I never thought would happen to me, and I truly believe I am a better pilot for it.*

## Part 135 – And How Was This Missed?

Human factors, again, increased risk in this Cessna 208 single pilot operation. Although the hazard developed into a serious incident, the aircraft was successfully recovered.

■ *…I arrived at the ZZZ airport and performed a preflight inspection in preparation for a revenue cargo flight to ZZZ1. While taxiing to Runway XX, I noticed that the rudder pedals were stiff. I assumed the stiffness was because it was a different aircraft. I was able to steer while taxiing. While climbing to 8,000 ft MSL, I noticed the turn coordinator skid/slip indicator was all the way to the left. I pushed on the rudder pedal to correct the condition and found the*

*rudder unresponsive. The pedal was very difficult to push, and I was not able to center the skid/slip indicator. After leveling at 8,000 ft MSL, I pulled back on the yoke several times thinking that the rudder gust lock may have been engaged. The uncoordinated flight condition persisted. I asked…Center for a diversion to ZZZ2. I did not want to return to ZZZ, as the main runway was closed, leaving only the shorter and narrower runway. About halfway enroute to ZZZ2, I noticed that fuel was rapidly shifting from the right-wing tank to the left. The LOW FUEL annunciator lamp illuminated, and the fuel warning horn sounded. A 400 lb fuel imbalance had developed due to the uncoordinated flight. The aircraft was becoming more difficult to control, so I requested priority handling and diverted to ZZZ3, which was much closer than ZZZ2. I landed without incident on Runway XY. I taxied to the FBO, parked, and shut down the engine. While inspecting the aircraft, I discovered that the mechanical rudder gust lock was still engaged. I had failed to release it during my preflight inspection. Suggestions: Perform all actions prescribed in aircraft checklist.*

## Part 121 – Water, Water Everywhere…

This B757-200 Captain described an obvious hazard and multiple related problems that a competently performed preflight did not and may not identify. Be observant.

■ *There had been multiple Ops bans and thunderstorms with heavy rain that led to a significantly delayed flight. After the storms cleared, we completed a normal preflight and didn't observe any abnormalities. During pushback, we received various Yaw Damper messages followed by every ISIS (Integrated Standby Instrument System) message and every light on the overhead IRS panel illuminating. At the same time, both AFDs (Adaptive Flight Displays) showed unusual attitudes and would blank. This behavior occurred multiple times and seemed related to aircraft movement. After consulting with Dispatch, we performed a block turnback. When we blocked in, Maintenance reported water coming out of every drain on the aircraft. Shortly thereafter, Maintenance reported water in the Electrical/Electronics Bay [E/E Bay] and immediately told us to completely shut down the aircraft and go dark. Maintenance reported that the E/E Bay was flooded. I believe the Main Cargo Door was left open during the storms, and in essence, the plane flooded (we were not at the aircraft until after the weather passed). I think more emphasis should be placed on securing the aircraft for severe weather. Also, when it's not possible and the aircraft is left open and exposed to heavy rain, then Maintenance should be required to inspect the E/E Bay at a minimum for water and flooding. Thankfully, this happened on the ground. If we were airborne when the systems malfunctions occurred…we could have ended up with only the ISIS as reliable with convective weather in the area - that could have been a very dangerous setup.*

## Part 121 – Braking Points

This B737 Captain described a hazard originally discovered during the preflight inspection. When Maintenance arrived, the hazard was deemed worse than was originally thought.

■ *Upon rejecting an aircraft for an APU issue, the First Officer and I accepted an aircraft arriving from ZZZ1 overnight. The inbound Captain and First Officer, [who] was completing her OE (Operating Experience), stated it was a good plane. After a brief discussion as passengers deplaned, we proceeded to the gate agent and then to the aircraft for preflight. During the walk-around, the First Officer inspected the Left Main Landing Gear and found the Left Outboard Brake Pin appeared flush or recessed. Due to the heat, it was difficult to examine closely, but photos confirmed both front and rear brake pins were beyond limits. After completing the walk-around, the First Officer showed me the brake system. We discussed his findings, and I visually confirmed the brakes were indeed beyond limits. Maintenance personnel also agreed there was a problem, and we initiated a write-up for the brake wear. Maintenance determined the Left Main Outboard Brake required replacement. Boarding was paused, and passengers were advised they could deplane or remain seated. Once the gear was jacked, I informed passengers they must remain seated for approximately 30 minutes. The brake change was delayed by an additional 15 minutes due to the high temperature of the rotor and brake assembly. After maintenance completion, the Lead Maintainer briefed us, expressing shock that the outboard tire's fuse plug hadn't popped due to extreme heat. He stated the brake wear was so severe that the aircraft had flown multiple flights with no brake pads remaining on the front and back assembly. Also of note, the aircraft had a maintenance inspection completed in ZZZ1 the previous night, as noted with the ZZZ2 from ZZZ1 [log review]. Following this, passengers reboarded, and we departed for ZZZ3. Upon arrival, Maintenance in ZZZ3 informed the Captain that the outboard tire was flat, likely due to heat damage from the previous flight, and needed replacement.*

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*The reports featured in CALLBACK are offered in the spirit of stimulating thought and discussion. While NASA ASRS does not verify or validate reports, we encourage you, our readers, to explore them and draw your own conclusions.*

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| ASRS Alerts Issued in September 2026 | |
|---|---|
| **Subject of Alert** | **No. of Alerts** |
| Aircraft or Aircraft Equipment | 4 |
| Airport Facility or Procedure | 13 |
| ATC Equipment or Procedure | 13 |
| Hazard to Flight | 1 |
| Other | 4 |
| **TOTAL** | **35** |

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| September 2026 Report Intake | |
|---|---|
| Air Carrier/Air Taxi Pilots | 5,559 |
| Flight Attendants | 2,022 |
| General Aviation Pilots | 1,733 |
| Military/Other | 1,094 |
| Controllers | 303 |
| Dispatchers | 282 |
| Mechanics | 277 |
| **TOTAL** | **11,270** |