



Uncertainty Slowing Jet Sales, Broker Says

By Winthrop Quigley Journal Staff Writer

Uncertainty about Eclipse Aviation has slowed sales of Eclipse aircraft "significantly," according to an airplane broker who not only sells the jets but loves them, too.

Michael Press, CEO of Missouri-based Single Pilot Jet Management, told the Journal in a phone interview Friday that news of a Federal Aviation Administration safety audit of Eclipse jets as well as a recent crash in Pennsylvania has made some buyers wary of Eclipse, but that "the people who are flying them feel real good about them. Most of the owners I know really love the plane."

People who want to sell the plane are doing so because they find it too small or its range too limited, said Press, a retired Air Force colonel and former test pilot.

A Web site, Controller.com, that advertises aircraft for sale lists 84 Eclipse jets, compared to 562 Cessna, 168 Gulfstream and 194 Learjet jets. The 84 Eclipse jets listed include the right to buy aircraft that have not yet been built. More than half of the jets listed are being sold by Press' company; by another broker, Jets America; or by Eclipse itself.

Press, who said he confers regularly with Eclipse management, applauded the company's turnaround plan. He said Eclipse tried to ramp up to full production before it was ready and that Eclipse didn't have the manufacturing talent to match its design talent.

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MAY 2006: Eclipse announces move from Arizona to New Mexico, where it aims to revolutionize the private aviation with lightweight, inexpensive jet. It plans to hire up to 2,000 and build a plant on West Side but begins manufacturing at Sunport.

