



Fellow Osprey Builders,

I have some interesting calls from time to time from builders. Most have to do with a building problem of some kind.

A while back I got a call from a builder who was about to fly his Osprey for the first time. My first question is generally "how did the weight and balance work out?" The second question was, "What type of aircraft are you currently flying?"

In this builders case his Osprey had to be re-weighted since he set it on the scales at the wrong angle. After the new weight figures were found he called me and I double checked his weight and balance for him. As it turned out his first flight configuration showed he would be at about the 31.5% chord. As you know I would prefer 28% to 29% and not over 31%. The question I didn't ask was his weight. He was under 170 lbs. He was relatively low in flying time and had been flying low wing aircraft. As you know, low wing aircraft usually require little rudder input and more aileron in turns or in rough air than other types. I have flown the Osprey with the CG at the 38% chord and believe me it's very unstable.

The scenario I am describing is a light pilot with an aircraft that is slightly tail heavy and he is used to aileron type aircraft. You couple this with a first time test flight and a accident is quite possible.

The story does have a good ending, however, the first flight was a frightening experience for the builder. He called me and described the takeoff as quite normal. Once airborne and with the gear down he found the ailerons did not seem to give him any directional change and his Osprey seemed to wallow or slew in the turns. He stayed in the pattern and came in for a landing. I asked him if he used much rudder in establishing directional control or in turns. He said very little, if any! "I couldn't wait to get it on the ground" he said.

All of this is quite understandable but let's talk about what he should have done. First, get the first flight CG in the 25% to 28% chord by adding some weight forward. On the first take off make a long straight out departure, climbing to 1,000 ft or so. If the CHT & oil temp look good retract the gear so the rudder will turn easier. First turns should be large turns, lots of rudder, little aileron, neutralize and let it turn. Do the same to straighten out. Climb to 3,000 and stay within the field boundaries. Fly this first flight long enough to really get the feel of your Osprey. It will surprise you how fast your confidence will grow if you just take it easy and fly around for 45 minutes or so. If you're current and feel you are in complete control raise the nose about 3 degrees and start coming off on the power until you get a slight burble. The Osprey has a very honest stall. If you relax the back pressure and add power you will see very little or no altitude loss in this type of stall. The air speed reading will give you confidence on making a safe approach speed. Add 25% to 20% above this reading and use power down the glideslope until you're over the threshold.

Remember your Osprey is probably different than you're used to