



Return of the Workhorse

Once the darlings of blue-collar workers and those with real off-road work to do, pickup trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles now command premium prices because of their popularity among white-collar suburbanites and soccer moms. To accommodate these new buyers, manufacturers have nearly bred the “utility” out of their sport-utility vehicles; with overstuffed heated leather seats, cup

**The new
Cessna 206 is
back on the job**

BY THOMAS B. HAINES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FIZER

holders galore, and studio-quality stereos, the machines might be better called “sport-luxury vehicles.” ■ In revamping its long-dormant Model 206 Stationair, Cessna took note of the trend. Fortunately, Cessna’s designers knew when to quit, and the result is a comfortable and highly refined interior in an airplane that still meets its load-and-go-anywhere mission requirements. The

206 is in its element whether ushering briefcase-toting executives to the downtown airport or lugging tool-laden crews to the North Slope. Plush leather seats, a refined ventilation system, snazzy paint, and an all-new avionics panel seem at odds with the 206's optional oversized tires and hot prop, big cargo doors, and throaty new engine sound. But in the end, it's a combination that works—off airport or on.

Cessna introduced the 206H and the Turbo 206H late last year after a number of delays. Getting the rest of the single-engine production lines up and running again smoothly after a 10-year hiatus diverted Cessna's attention. Then, Cessna's engine choice for the new Stationairs didn't pan out. When last produced, in 1986, the new normally aspirated 206s were powered by Continental IO-520 engines producing takeoff power of 300 horsepower, 285 hp continuous; the turbocharged variant produced 310 hp. Since those days Cessna has been acquired by Textron, parent company of Lycoming. So it was no surprise that the new 206s would fly behind Lycoming powerplants. The plan was to develop new variants of the IO-540 (TIO-540 for the turbo model). In an effort to quiet the airplanes, the new IO-580 was to

If you're in a "runway challenged" region, about any unobstructed chunk of real estate 900 feet long will do.

produce 300 hp at 2,500 rpm, 350 fewer rpm than the Continental and 200 fewer than Lycoming's stock IO-540. The TIO-580 was to make its 310 hp at the same 2,500 rpm.

After months of work, Cessna and Lycoming decided that the new TIO-580 wasn't ready for prime time. Test engines were not achieving the reliability that Cessna desired, so last winter the company decided to switch to the Lycoming IO-540/TIO-540. The IO-540 achieves 300 hp at 2,700 rpm; the TIO-540 generates 310 hp at 2,500 rpm.

So, about a year behind the original schedule, the two new Stationairs received their fresh type certificates last fall. Cessna planned to deliver between 10 and 20 206s by the end of 1998. The company has orders already into the fourth quarter of 1999. The Independence, Kansas, factory is churning out about two Stationairs per week cur-



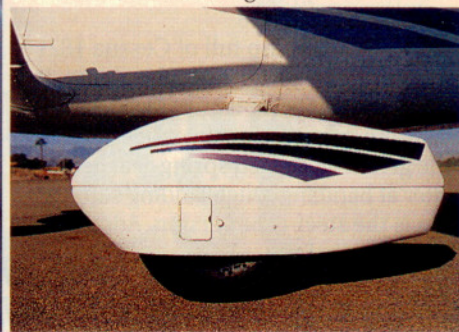


rently; production will ramp up to about three per week later this year.

Among the early buyers are the Kansas State Highway Patrol, which will use the airplane shown here for executive transportation, and the Uruguayan Air Force, which will put its 10 Stationairs to work moving cargo and personnel.

Base price of the 206 is \$304,900, which includes a pair of AlliedSignal Bendix/King navcoms, single-axis autopilot, and a VFR KLN 89 GPS. For another \$10,000 the buyer can upgrade the avionics to include an IFR KLN 89B GPS, an ADF, and a two-axis autopilot. Base price of the Turbo 206 is \$340,900; the options are the same. About 60 percent of the buyers are opting for the Turbo 206—not surprising, considering the extra performance and high-altitude capability that the turbo brings at only a 10-percent price penalty.

Included in the base price are leather seats. Fabric-covered seats or vinyl utility seats are available as a no-cost option. Floatplane provisions—which include hoisting rings to allow the airplane to be lifted for easy installation/removal of gear and floats, a removable windshield V-brace, and fuselage reinforcements—



run \$3,200. Electric heated propeller anti-ice boots can add \$4,750 to the price. Oversized tires and wheel fairings for off-airport operations lift the price another \$2,600. An exterior cargo pod will be available eventually.

Loaded with all the options except the cargo pod and sporting a tasteful cloth interior, N9554S, a normally aspirated 206, waited in the hot Nevada sun at North Las Vegas Airport. Cessna Western Division Sales Manager Rich Manor and I arrived loaded with gear. Manor flipped open the two cargo doors on the aft right side and started tossing in bags. We filled the back two seats of the six-seat cabin and dropped a couple of briefcases into the middle row of seats. Despite our week's worth of clothes and equipment, the baggage compartment behind the aft seats remained empty. Stationair operators of old will appreci-



ate the new latching mechanism for the aft doors. They can now be closed and latched from the outside. Previously the pilot would have to reach between the front and middle seats to latch the doors from the inside.

Sitting on a ramp full of Cessna 182s and 172s, the 206 seems to dominate. It sits high on its spring-leaf landing gear—a departure from the smaller models' steel-tube gear. The rugged spring-leaf gear is better at handling rough landing surfaces than is the steel-tube version. Adding to the big-airplane look is the three-blade McCauley propeller. Cessna owns McCauley, so the brand is no surprise. However, the rakish three-blade prop design is new to the 206.

The aft doors make loading the rear seats and baggage compartment easy. Access to the front and middle seats is most convenient through the front door, which is on the left side. The pilot's seat flips down for middle-row passengers. No matter which seat you end up

in, you'll appreciate the revised ventilation system that puts a Wamac adjustable air nozzle at each station. Likewise, the standard six-place intercom has jacks within easy reach. All six seats also get three-point inertia-reel harnesses.

Once I was strapped into the pilot's seat—new 26-G seats, by the way—it was easy to see all that Cessna has done to the new panel. As with the new 172 and 182, the 206H's panel is greatly improved over the earlier models.

Adjustable fluorescent floodlights under the glareshield light the flat metal panel. Additionally, internally lit instruments make night flying easy. The new Bendix/King avionics stack offers utility never before seen in a 206. New electric engine and fuel instruments provide accurate and reliable information. Dual vacuum pumps are standard. A comprehensive annunciator panel alerts the pilot to any system anomalies.

Upon startup, the big Lycoming responds with a deep, pleasing rumble.

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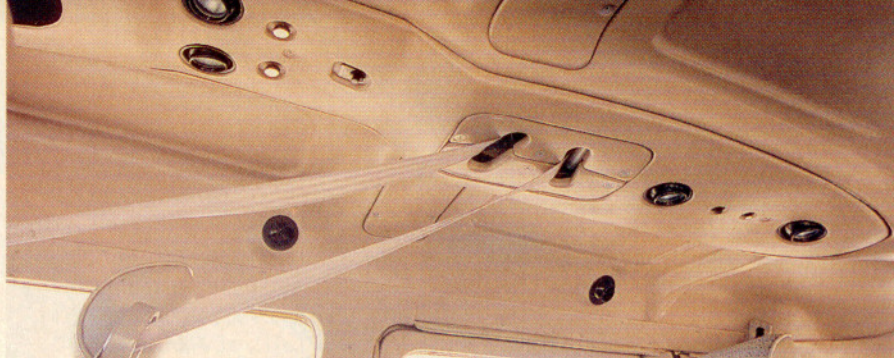


The new models come with improved sound-proofing, but as with virtually all piston-powered aircraft, your auditory nerves will appreciate your taking advantage of the intercom system.

After a 20-minute wait for take-off clearance, we were airborne and headed toward AOPA Expo '98 in Palm Springs, California. Tooling along just above the craggy, barren hills west of Las Vegas, we used the KLN 89B's moving map

to help us avoid the airspace around McCarran International. Clear of that airspace, we climbed to 9,500 feet and meandered southwestward toward Twentynine Palms, California, so as to not aggravate the military pilots plying the airspace near Edwards Air Force Base.

The Stationair maintained 500 feet per minute or better all the way up to altitude. As for handling, well, if you've flown a Skyhawk or Skylane, you've flown a Stationair. In some ways it is easier to fly than a Skyhawk. The 206's greater mass makes it a bit more



immune to turbulence. With highly effective flaps, slow-speed handling is even better than on the smaller models. For landing, throw out the flaps, dial in

a little nose-up trim, and let it "chirp, chirp" onto the runway. If you're in a "runway challenged" region, about any unobstructed chunk of real estate 900 feet long will do. This is one modern sport-utility vehicle that doesn't look out of place off-road.

Cessna's pilot's operating handbook says that the 206H will cruise at 140 knots true airspeed at 75-percent power at 6,000 feet at maximum weights. We

No matter which seat you end up in, you'll appreciate the revised ventilation system that puts a Wemac air nozzle at each station.

saw speeds closer to 150 KTAS at 65-percent power en route to Palm Springs. That was at 9,500 feet with an outside temperature of 6 degrees Celsius, 21 inches of manifold pressure, and 2,500 rpm. At that setting we were burning about 15 gph. At least part of the improved performance can be explained by the fact that we were several hundreds below max gross weight. With 88 gallons to draw from, the 206 at that power setting has an endurance of more than five hours with a 45-minute reserve.

With a typical useful load of 1,210 pounds, a Stationair full of fuel can still carry four 170-pound adults. If you don't need to fly for five hours, you can trade fuel for useful load. Take out the back two or four seats and the loading possibilities are almost limitless.

Thanks to the turbocharger, the T206H does even better. It will cruise at 164 KTAS at 17,000 feet and 75-percent power while burning 19.1 gph. The standard built-in oxygen system comes in handy on the way up to the 27,000-foot service ceiling.

Cessna calls the Stationair the "hardest-working piston single in the business." The phrase is a marketing catch-all for sure, but it's easy to see that with the 206H, Cessna hit on just the right combination of speed, comfort, payload, and room to make it a sure-fire

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hit. Not many of the luxu sport-utility vehicles work very hard these days, but at least the 206 can if you want it to. □

E-mail the author at thomas.haines@aopa.org. Photos of the Cessna 206 are available on AOPA's Online Gallery at: www.aopa.org/pilot/gallery/

Cessna 206H Stationair

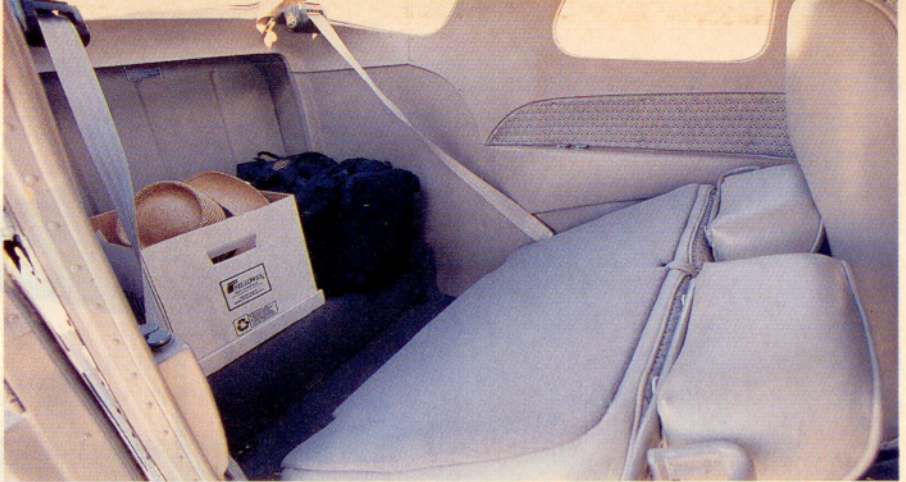
Base price: \$304,900
Price as tested: \$325,450

Specifications

Powerplant	Lycoming IO-540-AC1A5 300 hp @ 2,700 rpm
Recommended TBO	2,000 hr
Propeller	McCaughey constant-speed, three-blade, 79 in diameter
Length	28 ft 3 in
Height	9 ft 3.5 in
Wingspan	36 ft
Wing area	174 sq ft
Wing loading	20.7 lb/sq ft
Power loading	12 lb/hp
Seats	6
Cabin length	12 ft
Cabin width	3 ft 8 in
Cabin height	4 ft 2 in
Empty weight	2,210 lb
Empty weight, as tested	2,402 lb
Max ramp weight	3,614 lb
Useful load	1,402 lb
Useful load, as tested	1,210 lb
Payload w/full fuel	874 lb
Payload w/full fuel, as tested	682 lb
Max takeoff weight	3,600 lb
Fuel capacity, std	92 gal (88 gal usable) 552 lb (528 lb usable)
Oil capacity	11 qt
Baggage capacity (aft area)	180 lb
Performance	
Takeoff distance, ground roll	910 ft
Takeoff distance over 50-ft obstacle	1,860 ft
Max demonstrated crosswind component	20 kt
Rate of climb, sea level	988 fpm
Max level speed, sea level	151 kt
Cruise speed/endurance w/45-min rsv, std fuel (fuel consumption)	
@ 75% power,	141 kt/4.5 hr
6,000 ft	(100 pph/16.6 gph)
@ 65% power,	133 kt/5.2 hr
6,000 ft	(88 pph/14.7 gph)
Service ceiling	15,700 ft
Landing distance over 50-ft obstacle	1,395 ft
Landing distance, ground roll	735 ft
Limiting and Recommended Airspeeds	
V _X (best angle of climb)	70 KIAS
V _Y (best rate of climb)	86 KIAS
V _A (design maneuvering)	125 KIAS
V _{FE} (max flap extended)	140 KIAS (0-10 degrees)
V _{NO} (max structural cruising)	149 KIAS
V _{NE} (never exceed)	182 KIAS
V _{S1} (stall, clean)	62 KIAS
V _{SO} (stall, in landing configuration)	54 KIAS

For more information, contact Cessna Aircraft Company, One Cessna Boulevard, Wichita, Kansas 67215; telephone 316/941-6488; fax 316/941-7812. Or visit the Web site (www.cessna.textron.com).

All specifications are based on manufacturer's calculations. All performance figures are based on standard day, standard atmosphere, sea level, gross weight conditions unless otherwise noted.



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