

March 13, 2008

RV-12 ROLLS OUT – and FLIES!

On the morning of March 11, 2008 Van's General Manager sent a company-wide email: be in the hangar at 11:30 – we're rollin' out the RV-12!

At the appointed hour, Van pushed the ceremonial "up" button on the prototype shop door and as it opened, the gleaming new red and gold airplane was pulled into the hangar to a spontaneous round of applause.

It was quickly surrounded by employees from every department, anxious to see and touch the object of so much effort and anticipation. It was apparent that the engineering department and prototype shop had pulled out all the stops on this one. Once the cowl and tailcone are painted, this could be a show plane, rather than a prototype. There are no ragged edges anywhere. From the graceful sculptured duct taking air to the radiator and oil cooler to the completely sealed wing root fairing to the custom Flightline interior, it is a beautifully built airplane.

The Rotax 912ULS installation was especially tidy, with every duct, bracket and heat shield carefully designed and built. There's a stall warning vane in the left wing, with a clever plug that connects automatically when the wing is installed. The new nosegear is much cleaner than the one on the original RV-12. The handbrake on the stick is gone, replaced with standard toe brakes. The fuel tank has a neat little sight gauge built in, so you can cross-check the fuel level through the window before you climb in.

We've had lots of questions about the panel. Here's our answer: A custom Dynon provides flight/engine instrumentation. A Garmin SportPac handles avionics chores. A special switch panel and fuse holder sit in front of the pilot...the fuses light up when they blow. The throttle "quadrant" contains the throttle, naturally enough, but there's no mixture or prop control on this airplane. The other cables are the choke and the cabin heat.

In the morning of March 11, N412RV was weighed (738 lbs!) and inspected by a DAR (passed!).

On March 12, Van took advantage of a good patch of weather and made a short first flight. He reported that the new wing flew much like the old one and the elevator was slightly lighter. (The following day, today, the weather was miserable – gusting winds and blowing rain – so we will have to wait for more details of flying qualities and performance.)

Final details of the kit and kit pricing are being analyzed and worked out. No orders will be taken, waiting lists established or bribes accepted before April 8.

Watch for order forms and further details on our website – and at Sun 'n Fun (April 8-12) where the new RV-12 will be on display.