

# External Power: Starting Amps a Plus

*Ground power units are a must for doing avionics ground training. But only Enhanced Flight's GPU also provides starting amps.*

**W**hen gas was cheap(er), no one thought about doing avionics training on the ground. After all, how long does it take to learn to tune a radio and center a needle? Glass panels changed that. Now, even if you have a sim program, you still have to seal the deal with some seat time in the airplane.

That's best done on the ground, preferably with the engine off and that's where a ground power unit comes in. Not many owner hangars have these valuable gadgets, but a new offering from Audio Authority, the 2860A GPU, might provide a reason to buy one. With 60 amps of output, the Enhanced Flight GPU is the only small product of its kind to provide start assist capability.

## HEAVY DUTY

This GPU is designed and constructed more or less like an audio rack component because that's where it comes from. The product is built by Audio Authority, which actually specializes in audio display components for retail stores but whose owner, Jonathan Sisk, has been active in developing STCs for the Piper Mirage.

The 2860A GPU is small for its output, measuring 7.2 by 14.6 by 13.7 inches with a weight of 23.8 pounds. It's easily carryable in

a baggage compartment, if necessary. It's equipped with a long cable which, conveniently, can unplug from the unit itself, making it easier to carry and stow. Two robust marine-type plastic cleats serve as cable stows on either side of the GPU. The front panel is equipped with a digital volt and ammeter display and is overload protected. For flexibility, there are plastic feet on both the bottom and back of the GPU.

With its high output, this GPU is suitable for starting an aircraft with a low but not necessarily flat battery. The com-

pany says to serve as external power, the ship's battery should show at least 22 volts. (The GPS is 28 volts only.)

Although the GPU will top up a battery, it has no cutoff or charging circuitry, so it's not specifically a battery charger. If we have any wants, we would say it's dual voltage. Although we can't think of many (if any) glass airplanes still running 12-volt systems, having this as an option is desirable, especially if the device is used by an FBO, a club or owner group with a mixed fleet. A dual cable option would also be a plus.

At \$1095 complete, the GPU is a good value against the popular Red Baron APU at \$675. Although the Red Baron is dual voltage and can be equipped with dual cabling for the Piper-type plug, it lacks start assist capability which, sooner later, everyone seems to need.



## CONTACT

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*The GPU 2860A has digital volt and ammeter monitoring. A dual cable with the Piper-type plug would be a nice addition, as provided by the Red Baron, inset.*