First Production Advanced MD Explorer Makes First Flight

The first production version of the advanced Boeing MD Explorer twin-turbine, eight-place helicopter made its maiden flight here on Sept. 5.

The new helicopter incorporates advances in technology, more powerful engines and improvements in the aircraft's basic design that are expected to result in better performance and lower direct operating costs for its operators. The enhanced performance includes eight-percent greater range and four-percent more endurance, plus the ability to carry 250-pound additional payload than the original MD Explorer.

"The new MD Explorer is undoubtedly the best commercial helicopter we've ever built," said Erv Hunter, vice president of the company's Light Helicopter Program. "From all aspects of performance, safety, ease of flight and lower cost of ownership, the helicopter is going to be a winner."

To give the aircraft greater flexibility in its operations, particularly in Europe and other areas where operating requirements are more stringent, the helicopter will be certified for "Category A" performance. This designation permits the helicopter to safely continue with a takeoff or landing following the failure of one of its two turbine engines.

The helicopter also will be certified for single-pilot Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) operations.

Among the physical changes in the aircraft will be improved engine air inlets, new Pratt and Whitney 206E turbine engines, increased thermodynamic ratings, improved NOTAR® inlet design and an improved stabilizer control system.

The MD 900 Explorer was certified and first deliveries were made in December 1994. Since that time, the company has delivered 30 aircraft to operators in the United States, Japan, Korea, Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Venezuela.

The company has phased out production of the original model MD Explorer in anticipation of deliveries of the advanced model, which are expected to begin in November. Certification by the Federal Aviation Administration is expected in October.

"We are very pleased with market response to the original MD Explorer," Hunter said. "The helicopter is rapidly becoming a favorite with air medical operators and we expect to announce several new orders from that market segment in the very near future."

Among the aircraft's features is the NOTAR® system for anti-torque and directional control, which replaces the traditional tail rotor. The result is a quieter, safer helicopter.

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