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Boeing Commercial Airplane Group president Ron Woodard today announced the next steps in a recovery plan designed to overcome the production delays and challenges facing the company as it ramps up to meet unprecedented customer demands for the full range of airplane products.

"Boeing has been going through all the growth pains associated with ramping up from a production schedule of 18 airplanes per month just 18 months ago to 40 planes per month today," said Woodard. "As a result, we face the tremendous task of producing and delivering our products as promised."

Parts shortages continue to be the most pressing issues for the company. These shortages impact all product lines but are especially significant as they relate to the 747 and the Next-Generation 737.

"We have determined that the most effective recovery measure for the 747 is to immediately stop the production line for 20 manufacturing days," said Bob Dryden, executive vice president - Airplane Production. "This will allow us to complete those jobs that have fallen behind schedule."

Dryden went on to say that "the Next-Generation 737 airplanes currently in production will continue to move through the factory and parts will be installed as they become available. However, no Next-Generation 737 airplanes will enter final assembly for the next 25 days."

Dryden further noted that "during the flight test program for the Next-Generation 737-700 we learned that the horizontal stabilizer design was too flexible, causing some vibration. Of course, this is exactly what a flight-test program is intended to do - find anything that needs to be changed. So we've made the necessary design change by adding graphite stiffeners to the stabilizer beams. These changes and obtaining the new parts required to make them has delayed our expected certification date for the 737-700."

"We're working closely with our customers and realize that any delays in delivery are very serious and impact their bottom line," said Woodard. "Our plan is just the kick-start we need to get back on schedule and our entire team remains totally focused on working our way through this challenge."

Boeing expects to deliver approximately 335 airplanes in 1997.

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