Boeing Rolls Out 3,000th 737 "Classic"

Boeing Commercial Airplane Group last night achieved a significant manufacturing milestone when employees rolled the 3,000th Boeing 737 "Classic" out of the manufacturing facility in Renton, Wash., where the popular twinjets have been manufactured since 1970.

The "Classic" family includes the 737-100/-200/-300/-400/-500 models. (The Next-Generation 737 family -- the 737-600/-700/-800/-900 -- have a separate manufacturing line numbering system.)

The historic rollout occurs 31 years after Boeing rolled out the first 737-100 on Jan. 17, 1967. That rollout took place at the company's Plant 2 facility in Seattle, the initial site of 737 production.

"Through three decades of hard work and commitment, Boeing employees have built an unmatched legacy of success with the 737," said Gary Scott, vice president and general manager of 737/757 Programs. "With roughly 900 more 737s currently on order, we can look forward to extending this legacy for future generations of employees."

The 3,000th 737 is a 146-passenger 737-400 model, scheduled for delivery to Alaska Airlines. Last November, the Seattle-based carrier became the launch customer for the 737-900 -- the fourth model in the Next-Generation 737 family -- when it announced an order for 10 737-900s, with 10 options. At the same time, the airline also announced orders for two 737-400s and three 737-700s.

The Boeing 737 is the best-selling commercial jetliner of all time. Airlines and other operators have ordered more than 3,870 737s -- which accounts for almost 40 percent of the more than 9,800 Boeing commercial jets ordered. Currently, more than 280 airline operators in more than 100 countries fly 737s. It is estimated that more than 825 737s are in the air at all times, with one taking off every 6 seconds.

The 737 was launched in February 1965 as a logical short-range airplane to complement the larger 707 and 727 jetliners. The first 737 -- the -100 model -- entered commercial service in Europe with Lufthansa in February 1968. Two months later, the 737 began commercial airline service in the United States with a longer-fuselage 737-200 model operated by United Airlines.

Once in service, the -200 quickly proved to be the overwhelming favorite of airline customers, and the -100 model was discontinued after production of 30 airplanes. These early models earned the 737 its reputation as a versatile, reliable, self-sufficient airplane, helping to establish commercial air service at remote airfields throughout the world without the need of ground support equipment such as jetways, electric power units and baggage conveyors.

Derivatives of the 737-200 were developed, including an advanced version that incorporated aerodynamic improvements, automatic wheel brakes, more powerful engines, and greater fuel capacity, gross weight and range than its predecessors. Later, a convertible passenger/cargo model and a executive version were offered.

In the 1980s, the advanced technology 737-300/-400/-500 family of jetliners were introduced to replace the earlier -100s and -200s. The newer jets were designed to be among the quietest and most fuel-efficient aircraft in the world. All three benefited from technology introduced on the Boeing 757 and 767 models, including advanced structural materials, new corrosion inhibiting techniques, advanced digital avionics technology, improved aerodynamics, and high-bypass engines.

Today, the Next-Generation 737 family is building on the success of its predecessors. Using a new and larger wing, higher cruise speed, greater range and more powerful engines, the Next-Generation 737s have achieved improvements in noise, fuel burn and thrust that allow them to fly higher, farther, faster and quieter than previous 737 models. In addition, the new engines benefit the environment through lower emissions.

Boeing also offers a special, high-performance derivative of the Next-Generation 737-700 specifically designed for corporate and VIP applications. With auxiliary fuel tanks, the Boeing Business Jet can fly more than 6,000 nautical miles. The business jet is sold and marketed through Boeing Business Jets, a joint venture formed in 1996 between The Boeing Company and the General Electric Co.

The Next-Generation 737 family continues to be the fastest-selling jetliner model in history. Since the program's launch in November 1993, 37 customers have placed orders for 811 Next-Generation 737s.