Boeing Chief Mechanic Earns Lifetime Achievement Award

Jack Hessburg, who recently retired as chief mechanic at Boeing after 42 years in his field, has won a lifetime achievement award from Overhaul & Maintenance magazine. The award was the first of its kind issued by the publication.

Hessburg was the first person designated chief mechanic by a commercial airplane manufacturer. Both a mechanical engineer and an airframe-and-powerplant (A&P) mechanic, he served in a number of maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) capacities during his career. Highlights included designing fuel-cell powerplants for Pratt & Whitney, teaching maintenance engineering and A&P courses at Parks College, and acting as airline support manager for the 747 and 767 jetliners.

In his role as chief mechanic at Boeing, Hessburg led a group of more than 100 mechanics in designing features into the 777 that have made it one of the most mechanic-friendly airplanes in the world.

One example was moving the recirculating fan motor from its original location. The initial design placed it in an overhead compartment and at arm's length from a mechanic, requiring the mechanic to stand on a ladder to reach it. When Hessburg realized that the motor weighed 20 pounds, he asked one of his 777 mechanics to stand on a ladder and hold a 20-pound barbell at arm's length. The mechanic nearly fell off the ladder, Hessburg said, proving the point that the motor needed to be relocated.

Many of the maintenance improvements Hessburg suggested for the 777 have contributed to the success of that model, as well as other Boeing twinjets. In addition, the design standards and methodologies developed for the 777 will be used in future Boeing designs.

"Jack's groundbreaking efforts on the 777 helped make it the world's most technologically advanced airplane and allowed us to offer extremely high initial dispatch reliability," said George Field, Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group vice president - Technical Services. "We are proud of his accomplishments, and this award from Overhaul & Maintenance magazine is well-deserved recognition."

Since the first delivery in May 1995, more than 200 777s have been delivered to 23 customers worldwide. The fleet has accumulated nearly one million flight hours and a schedule reliability rate of 99.17 percent, meaning 99.17 percent of the time the airplane departs the gate within 15 minutes of its scheduled departure. This high rate is one indicator of how well the 777 performs and how it requires little or no unscheduled maintenance between flights.

Overhaul & Maintenance magazine annually honors individuals in the aviation or aerospace aftermarket for their improvements or significant contributions to a company's MRO operation or to aviation MRO in general.

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For further information:
Dick Schleh
206-544-9528