Boeing Builds Newest Jetliner to Deliver in the New Century

The first new derivative-design airplane to deliver in the next century is taking shape now as the wing, body and tail sections of the 767-400ER (extended range) are joined in the Boeing factory.

"We started with aggressive goals, and this airplane has come together even better than we planned," said Alan Mulally, Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group president. "It's setting the stage for a very successful program."

Mulally attributed production success to teamwork, digital design and a focus on manufacturing quality. Boeing structured its cross-functional teams to be accountable for an entire section of the airplane. This strategy, combined with working together with customers and suppliers, enabled the teams to effectively integrate the large systems that make up the airplane.

Production also benefited from digital definition. Newly designed airplane parts were created in computer-aided, three-dimensional interactive (CATIA) software, allowing for a higher degree of accuracy. Teams were able to pre-assemble parts in computers to check for fit and eliminate interference. Because a significant number of original mylar drawings also were converted to three-dimensional digital data, approximately 80 percent of the airplane now is defined in digital format.

In many cases, digital design was used to create more accurate tools. Mulally noted these tools enhance the quality of not only the 767-400ER, but all 767 models.

"We've been preparing to build the 767-400ER for more than two years," Mulally said. "We involved everyone - from the customer to the raw-material supplier. Now we're realizing the benefits, and it is very exciting."

Boeing developed new features for the 767-400ER that include:

- A state-of-the-art flight deck with large format displays, arranged similar to the 777, Next-Generation 737, and 747-400 flight decks
- Passenger-cabin architecture inspired by the award-winning 777, with curved sidewalls and ceilings to create an even greater sense of spaciousness
- Full-cabin, inflight entertainment, supported by a higher-capacity (120-kva) electrical power system
- An all-new, main landing gear, which will give this longer airplane similar handling characteristics to the 767-300 during landing and takeoff

In addition, Boeing updated a number of airplane systems using the latest digital technology, which will make the industry's most reliable, intermediate-sized, twin-engine jetliner even more reliable, robust and easy to maintain.

The largest 767 - the 767-400ER - joins the 767-200/-200ER and 767-300/-300ER, creating a family of airplanes that can carry from 224 to 304 passengers in a typical two-class seating arrangement. About 75 operators from 41 different countries fly 767s today.

The 767-400ER is scheduled to roll out of the factory in August and make its inaugural flight in October. The flight-test program will use three airplanes, with U.S. Federal Aviation Administration type certification and European Joint Aviation Authority validation of the type certification expected in April 2000. The first airplane will deliver to launch customer Delta Air Lines in May 2000.

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