Boeing MD-10 Receives FAA Certification, Delivers To FedEx

The Boeing Company announced today that the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration has granted the company an amended type certificate and a production certificate of airworthiness for the MD-10 freighter. The company simultaneously delivered the first of 89 MD-10s to FedEx, the MD-10's launch customer, at a joint FAA-Boeing-FedEx ceremony at Williams-Gateway Airport in Mesa, Arizona.

"MD-10" is the designation given to modified DC-10 airplanes that incorporate the Boeing Advanced Common Flight deck (ACF). The MD-10 instrument panel layout is identical to that in the Boeing MD-11 with a two-crew flight deck. Because of the significant similarities between the MD-10 and MD-11 flight decks, pilots can be qualified to fly the two airplanes interchangeably.

The amended type certificate allows modification of DC-10 airplanes into MD-10 airplanes, while the production certificate of airworthiness is required for the airplane to go into service.

"These certifications represent the hard work of a combined team of Boeing and FedEx employees and are representative of FedEx's commitment to one of the world's most technologically advanced commercial airplane freighters," said Joe Gullion, president of Boeing Airplane Services.

FedEx launched the program in 1997 with an agreement to retrofit 70 DC-10s and the option to retrofit an additional 50 DC-10s. Boeing offered the MD-10 program to the owners of all 413 DC-10s in service or storage, giving the program the potential to become the largest airplane modification effort in commercial airplane history.

"The MD-10 Program gives us a safe and reliable airplane that will provide significant returns for FedEx and our customers," said Don Barber, senior vice president, FedEx Air Operations. "By offering us predictable fleet growth and flexible airplane scheduling, the program will help FedEx maintain the highest service standards in the industry."

The MD-10 recently completed a rigorous yearlong flight test program that spanned 1,060 hours using two airplanes in 802 flights. Boeing and FedEx conducted the flight test program using a unique "team" approach that involved FedEx maintenance mechanics, pilots, and engineering personnel and their Boeing counterparts. To date, more than 300 FedEx mechanics have completed hands-on training with the airplane.

The airplanes flew to 33 different airports and made over 1,400 landings, approaches and go-arounds. These flights were just a portion of the rigorous FAA-approved certification process.

The MD-10 flight deck employs state-of-the-art avionics systems provided by Honeywell Air Transport Systems of Phoenix, Ariz. The new flight deck features six 8-inch-square (20.3 cm2) liquid-crystal displays, operated by a Honeywell VIA 2000 computer system. The system is similar to those found in airplanes such as the Boeing 777 and 717.

The certification and modification program for the MD-10 is managed by Boeing Airplane Services, which offers engineering retrofit packages, avionics upgrades, passenger-to-freighter conversions, interior reconfigurations, recovery and repair services, and airplane performance improvements for all Boeing commercial airplanes. Boeing Airplane Services also has the most comprehensive spare parts distribution system in the industry, with a worldwide network of distribution and service centers. Additionally, it provides technical consulting and general contracting support for passenger and cargo airlines.

Boeing Airplane Services is part of the Boeing Commercial Aviation Services organization, which offers the aviation industry's broadest array of support resources. More than 11,000 Boeing airplanes are in operation around the world today.

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