

Boeing Rapid Response Center Proves Its Worth In First Year

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During its first year of operation, the Boeing Rapid Response Center has saved airlines an estimated \$50 million by reducing the time it takes to solve technical problems that cause "airplane on ground" (AOG) situations.

The center is a fully staffed, one-stop source of assistance for airlines outside of normal Boeing business hours. During nights, weekends and holidays it is staffed by 10 to 12 technical specialists, including structures engineers, stress analysts, systems troubleshooters, maintenance engineers, field service reps and spares experts.

While Boeing has always offered around-the-clock support to its customers, the startup of the Rapid Response Center marked the first time the company assembled such a broad team of technical experts -- equipped with sophisticated databases -- in one room. Boeing is the first airplane manufacturer to offer a service of this type.

"Our center provides real-time, detailed technical help for operators during the off hours," said Brad Cvetovich, vice president and general manager of Customer Support for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "We have a full complement of technical expertise on duty to resolve most of the AOG queries right on the spot. This is unprecedented in our industry. We're focused on providing customers all the help they need - and delivering it when they need it."

Since its startup in July 1999, the center has assisted about 400 operators with nearly 5,000 AOGs. The average time to resolve a technical issue is about an hour-and-a-half. Most problems are minor, but could affect critical systems which would prevent an airplane from being dispatched.

By resolving such issues quickly, the Rapid Response Center helps operators get airplanes back into service with minimal impact on schedules. In calculating the estimated cost savings attributable to the center, Boeing conservatively estimates that a one-to-two-hour AOG delay costs an airline \$10,000 in downtime. Actual costs of such delays can run as high as \$150,000, depending on airplane model and the airline.

The Rapid Response Center is based at the Boeing Customer Support facility in Seattle, with a videoconference link to a satellite office in Everett, Wash. In the near future, Boeing expects to extend the center's coverage to include Douglas-built models, which are currently served by a 24-hour help desk in Long Beach, Calif.

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