Boeing Next-Generation 737-900 Flies for the First Time

The largest and newest Boeing Next-Generation 737 jetliner ever made took to the skies over Washington state today on its maiden flight.

The Boeing 737-900, which is painted in red, white and blue Boeing livery, will be delivered to launch customer Alaska Airlines in April 2001. It rolled down the runway at the Renton Municipal Airport in Renton, Wash., then took off at 10:06 a.m. PDT, flying north over Lake Washington. The airport is located adjacent to the Boeing Commercial Airplanes final assembly plant where Boeing 737s are manufactured.

Boeing Capts. Mike Carriker and Mark Feuerstein flew the airplane, west toward the Pacific Ocean, then flew south to Astoria, Ore., and back and forth over Washington State's Olympic Peninsula before landing at Boeing Field in Seattle.

At Boeing Field, the airplane was greeted by a group of employees from Boeing that included Alan Mulally, president, Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group.

"This is a fantastic airplane for Alaska Airlines," said Mulally. "It's going to allow them to fly more passengers than any other airplane in their fleet and it's got great economics, too. It's the most fuel-efficient single-aisle twinjet on the market today. We are very proud of Alaska's leadership with the development of the 737 family."

During the 2-hour 58-minute flight, Carriker and Feuerstein conducted a series of tests on the airplane's systems and structures. The two were in constant radio contact with a group of flight-test engineers waiting at Boeing Field.

The flight-test phase of the 737-900 development program began with the Thursday flight. Over the next several months, this airplane and one other 737-900 flight-test airplane are scheduled to complete an estimated 380 flight-test hours and 120 ground-test hours. The testing must be completed before the 737-900 can be certified by regulatory agencies in the U.S. and Europe.

At 138 feet 2 inches (42.1 meters), the 737-900 is 8 feet 8 inches (2.6 meters) longer than the Next-Generation 737-800. It can carry up to 177 passengers in a two-class configuration, 15 more than the 737-800 can carry. It holds up to 189 passengers in a one-class configuration.

The Next-Generation 737 family is the most advanced design technology family in the single-aisle market. Besides the 737-900 and the 737-800, the Boeing Next-Generation 737 consists of the 737-600, 737-700, the 737-700C convertible, and the Boeing Business Jet, a modified 737-700.

The 737-900 program was launched in November 1997 with an order for 10 airplanes from Alaska Airlines. Continental Airlines, Royal Dutch Airlines and Korean Airlines also have ordered the airplane.

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