Boeing Spokane Acquires $9 Million Duct Work

Boeing Spokane in July will open a new $9 million-a-year business when it manufactures its first Environmental Control System (ECS) ducts using newly acquired "rotomold" machines.

Boeing Spokane this month geared up to begin production of the ducts, which conduct air throughout an airplane, including to passengers and crew. The first of two rotational mold, or "rotomold," machines used to produce the ducts were transferred from the Commercial Airplanes Fabrication Division in Auburn, Wash. Boeing Spokane is part of Commercial Airplanes Aircraft Systems & Interiors.

Boeing Spokane General Manager Suzette Grimm said significant reductions in inventory and implementing work cells for the past five years have resulted in opening up floor space that allows Boeing Spokane to absorb the work.

"This is an important part of the Boeing Spokane business plan," Grimm said. "Implementing Lean Manufacturing practices always has been a strength of our employees here, and being selected as the site to receive this work is viewed as a reward."

The smaller machine, 25 feet wide, 20 feet deep and 12 feet tall, was installed June 2 and will be in limited production in July. Spokane is slated to first ship parts on July 30. The Fabrication Division will transfer the larger machine, 53 feet wide, 37 feet deep and 14 feet tall, on July 27. Both machines go into full production Oct. 1.

Boeing Spokane will produce some 263 nylon ECS ducts per day, or 65,000 per year. They range in length from 3 inches to 6 feet, and are 1/2 to 8 inches in diameter. Approximately 50 percent will be used in the Renton, Wash., final assembly facility, many of them on the 737 line. Thirty percent will be used in final assembly in Everett, Wash., with the remainder used elsewhere, including Spokane, Wichita, Kan., and Harbour Pointe, Wash.

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