Virgin Atlantic Orders Advanced Software Tool From Boeing

Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd. is the latest customer for The Boeing Company's Portable Maintenance Aid(PMA), a powerful software tool that helps mechanics troubleshoot jetliners quickly for improved dispatch reliability.

More than 70 of the world's leading airlines, including Virgin Atlantic, are PMA customers. At least 40 more carriers have signed agreements to evaluate the product.

Virgin Atlantic will use the software to support maintenance and engineering activity on its fleet of Boeing 747 jetliners. The United Kingdom-based carrier has been a 747 operator since 1984.

Boeing developed PMA software in the mid-1990s and began marketing it three years ago to Boeing and Douglas fleet operators. Boeing also offers a version for operators of Fokker aircraft.

The software actually is an entire digitized library of key technical information contained in just a few compact discs. The discs can be loaded in a mechanic's laptop computer for quick access when servicing an airplane in the airport gate environment.

This eliminates the need to make repeated trips to a crew room or technical library to search for information on paper or microfilmed documents. The software's advanced search capability and hyperlinks connect related references in text, allowing instant access to any part of the Fault Isolation Manual, Aircraft Maintenance Manual, Aircraft Illustrated Parts Catalog and many other documents.

Intelligent graphics technology enables users to point-and-click on a highlighted area of an illustration and instantly bring troubleshooting text into view. Boeing estimates that these and other features of the software reduce the time it takes to search and retrieve information by as much as 40 percent.

PMA software is available in both read-only and customizable versions. It also is network compatible, allowing access by multiple users on a local server. Engineering staffs find it particularly useful for analyzing technical problems and issuing work orders.

The software is one of several information technology offerings from Boeing Commercial Aviation Services. These offerings include both online and media-based products and services for airplane maintenance and operation.

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