Boeing Employees Celebrate Rollout of New 747-400ER

Thousands of proud Boeing employees today celebrated the debut of their new 747-400ER (extended range) airplane at a ceremonial rollout in the largest building in the world.

The airplane, the 1,308th 747 to be assembled in the Everett Boeing ([NYSE: BA] factory, is the newest derivative in the 747 family of jets. It now begins final preparations for its first flight.

"What a tremendous accomplishment by an incredible team," said Jeff Peace, 747 vice president and general manager. "When I looked out into that sea of people at our rollout celebration it brought home that it truly does take all of us to build a 747. Working together really works."

The gleaming red, white and blue 747-400ER will soon be towed across a bridge over Washington state highway 526 to the Everett flight line, where it will undergo a series of scheduled tests before the engines run for the first time.

The airplane will be one of two 747-400ERs tested over the next three months to certify that it meets all regulatory and customer requirements. These airplanes will rack up more than 230 hours of flight-testing and 380 hours of ground tests. Before the airplane takes off for the first time, it will have accumulated nearly 200 test hours, validating data gained by engineering analysis and in the laboratory. First flight is expected in July.

"When the weather's right and the airplane's ready, we'll go. We can't wait to fly this airplane," said Art Fanning, 747 chief engineer for testing. "Our pilots, ground crews and engineers are raring to go."

The 747-400ER provides new features and capabilities that add value for customers, including the 747-400ER's spacious new Boeing signature interior architecture -- similar to that in the 777 and 767. The new capabilities include greater range or more payload, a choice customers make to best fit their operations.

The longer-range 747-400ERs -- available as both passenger and freighter airplanes -- are the same size as today's 747-400s, but they allow airlines and cargo carriers to fly longer routes, or carry more cargo or passengers on existing routes. To support this enhanced capability, the new 747-400ER Freighter and passenger versions have increased their gross takeoff weight by 35,000 pounds (15,870 kilograms) to 910,000 pounds (412,770 kilograms). Both airplanes offer an unbeatable combination of payload, range and speed; the 747-400 is the world's fastest subsonic jetliner.

The first 747-400ER will be delivered in October to launch customer Qantas Airways. The first 747-400ER Freighter also will be delivered in October.

In addition to the 747-400ER, Boeing also is developing two new longer-range 777s, the 777-300ER (extended range) and the 777-200LR (longer-range). The first of the two 777s, the 777-300ER, begins production this week. These longer-range 777s complement the 747-400, and together the two airplane programs form the backbone of the Boeing long-range airplane strategy.

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