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Critical systems' software designed, developed and maintained by The Boeing Company [NYSE:BA] for the International Space Station has successfully completed a key milestone toward a world-class rating from the Software Engineering Institute (SEI).

The certification is one of several levels that must be completed in the rigorous process to reach the SEI's world-class capability maturity model level 5. The software is a critical component because it controls the orbiting vehicle's operations, including more than 60 computers dedicated to maintaining the 168-ton space station's attitude as it orbits the Earth once every 90 minutes, and controlling such functions as electronic equipment and life-support systems for the three-person crew. The first element of the space station was launched in November 1998.

"It takes a world-class software system to operate the International Space Station (ISS) safely and effectively," said Maria Montemayor, manager of Boeing avionics and software productivity, who managed the Houston team throughout the certification process. "This was a monumental achievement. It's helping us to better position ourselves and our customers to meet the challenges of the 21st century." The Houston team is part of NASA Systems, a business unit of Boeing Integrated Defense Systems based in St. Louis. Boeing is NASA's prime contractor on the International Space Station.

Last year the team began the rigorous process to achieve the SEI's highest rating, level 5. Achieving level 3 means the team has processes in place that lessen the chances of defective products, reduce the product development cycle time, and improve communications among team members. Normally, it takes 18 months to achieve each level of the five-step certification, but 24 months after starting the group received a level 3 assessment rating.

The team's next challenge is achieving levels 4 and 5 ratings. Level 5 will certify the software system as being world-class -- a system that has processes in place to reduce product defects, allow quick and accurate software modification, enable accurate prediction of cost and schedules, and reduce the learning curve for new people to the Boeing software group.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems, is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a \$23 billion business. It provides systems solutions to its global military, government and commercial customers. It is a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; the world's largest military aircraft manufacturer; the world's largest satellite manufacturer and a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in launch services.

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