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The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] announced today it is the sponsor of next week's dedication ceremony for the National Air and Space Museum's new Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center. The ceremony takes place Dec. 11 at 11:00 a.m. and will include 2,000 invited guests, many of whom are pioneers of aviation and space. The center officially opens to the public Dec. 15, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of Orville and Wilbur Wright's first successful powered flight on Dec. 17.

"Boeing is proud to support the dedication of what is an impressive collection of aerospace history," said Boeing President and CEO Harry Stonecipher. "At this time when we're celebrating 100 years of powered flight, it's gratifying to be associated with such a large and well-preserved range of products that tell the history of aviation and space exploration."

Forty-five Boeing products will be among the 200 aircraft and 135 space artifacts that will eventually be on display at the center. Boeing aircraft exhibited next week include the last surviving 307 Stratoliner, the first pressurized airplane; the Dash 80, prototype of the 707, which was the first U.S. jetliner; and the B-29 Superfortress named Enola Gay. Next to the main hangar, an adjoining building will house spacecraft such as the space shuttle Enterprise, which Boeing helped build, and various Boeing missiles and rocket engines. The space hangar is named for James S. McDonnell, founder of McDonnell Aircraft, which built America's first manned spacecraft, Project Mercury.

The Udvar-Hazy Center is adjacent to Washington Dulles International Airport in Virginia and is the National Air and Space Museum's primary artifact restoration facility. It will display 80 percent of the museum's collection, much of which has never been shown to the public. Attendance at the center is projected at 3 million people a year.

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