Boeing Opens New Pulse Line for Satellite Assembly

ST. LOUIS, Aug. 11, 2008 -- Boeing [NYSE: BA] announced today that it is ready to use a new "pulse line" process for assembling satellites in El Segundo, Calif. The new process is expected to shorten the time needed to build a space vehicle.

The first satellites to be manufactured on the pulse line will be the Global Positioning System (GPS) IIF satellites Boeing is building for the U.S. Air Force. All Boeing's satellite production lines will adopt the new process over time.

"With this new process, we are reducing the travel distance of a space vehicle from 12,000 feet to 10,000 feet," said John Duddy, director of GPS programs for Boeing. "We are really excited about this new build process for space vehicles and its impressive results, and our Air Force customer is pleased to have the GPS spacecraft used for this new process."

The new process will move parts through 13 pulse positions. New work cells, new tooling, standard work-planning packages and Lean manufacturing processes will reduce the total build time per satellite and increase the number of vehicles moving through the line at one time. The line is intended to eliminate rework, allowing parts to flow continuously and smoothly through the process.

"With 12 satellites on order, the GPS program is ideal for a manufacturing pulse line, because similar satellites can easily adapt to a process that mirrors mass production," said Craig Cooning, vice president and general manager of Boeing Space and Intelligence Systems. "The value of a pulse line is that it increases efficiency and therefore enables us to reduce costs. As we continue to simplify our satellite designs in order to standardize the items that are inherent in every spacecraft built by Boeing, the implementation of a pulse line will yield tremendous benefits in the areas of efficiency and cost savings."

The Air Force is currently under contract with Boeing to build 12 GPS IIF satellites that will provide the newest GPS technology and capability to civilians and the warfighter.

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