Boeing 737 Program Begins Production at Higher Rate

Thirty-five airplanes a month will soon be rolling out the factory doors

RENTON, Wash., Oct. 18, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Boeing (NYSE: BA) began building the first Next-Generation 737 at the program's new production rate of 35 airplanes a month. The rate is increasing from 31.5 airplanes a month to meet worldwide market demand for the best-selling single-aisle airplane.

Today employees loaded chords and webs manufactured by the Boeing Fabrication division into the company's newest automated spar assembly tool, the first visible step in the final assembly of the airplane. The parts were then joined to make a spar, the main support structure for the wings.

"The start of spar assembly today demonstrates the progress the 737 team has made," said Beverly Wyse, vice president and general manager of the 737 program. "This is part of the series of rate increases to meet customer demand for the most popular airplane in aviation history."

Boeing has taken a three-fold approach to prepare for the rate increases on the 737 program. The company is making production processes more efficient by working with employee process improvement teams, increasing the production capacity with capital investments such as a new wings system installation line in the Renton factory and making the site footprint more efficient by moving some production areas, expanding others and decommissioning outdated equipment.

The automated spar assembly tool used to build the first spar is the ninth such machine at the Renton factory, drilling about 1,700 holes and inserting fasteners to make the spar. The tool increases the 737's wing-building capacity and is an example of one of many facilities changes happening at the Renton site to increase capacity and prepare for rate increases.

The 737 production rate will increase to 38 airplanes a month in the second quarter of 2013 and to 42 airplanes a month in the first half of 2014.

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