Boeing Completes Flight Of Biggest-Ever Passenger Jet

EVERETT, Wash. (AP) — The Boeing Co.'s newest and largest passenger plane completed its first flight on Sunday, marking another milestone as the company prepares to get the long-haul jumbo jet ready for the market by the end of the year.

The 4½ hour-flight, which began in Everett and landed in Seattle, was the first in a months-long test program that will log more than 600 flight hours between now and the fall. Two pilots flew the 747-8 Intercontinental from Paine Field across Washington state, rousing cheers from several thousand Boeing workers who watched.

Chief test pilot Capt. Mark Feuerstein said the flight was clean and that the airplane was "ready to go fly right now."

The new plane, which has a new wing design and an upgraded flight deck, can carry up to 467 passengers with a range of about 8,000 nautical miles.

The company expects to deliver the jet by the end of 2011, said Elizabeth Lund, Boeing vice president and general manager of the 747 program. A cargo version of the plane has been in flight tests for about a year.

Feuerstein and co-pilot Capt. Paul Stemer guided the plane up to 20,000 feet, and traveled about 250 knots, testing the airplane's handling and performance, including its maneuvering abilities.

"It's one of the cleanest first-flight airplanes of a new design that I've seen," Feuerstein said. "It just went perfectly."

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