Boeing Frustrated With Dreamliner Glitch

Alex Kennedy, Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Boeing Co., the world's second-largest plane maker, is frustrated with the latest 787 Dreamliner production glitch, but it shouldn't delay output goals, a top executive said Sunday.

Boeing has fixed a shimming problem discovered earlier this month on some 787 fuselages and plans to inspect other planes for the error, Boeing vice president of 787 development Mark Jenks said. Shims are used to close tiny gaps in joints.

"It's a pretty straightforward issue," Jenks told reporters in Singapore. "It shouldn't have any significant impact on our production ramp-up."

Boeing still plans to boost production from a current two to three 787s per month to 10 of the planes per month by the end of next year, Jenks said. Boeing delivered its first Dreamliners last year to All Nippon Airways after a parts shortage, a labor strike and a fire on a test flight triggered several delays and pushed back delivery by three years.

"Clearly it's frustrating, and we'd rather it not happen," Jenks said. "We've really moved from some things that early on hit us that really were sort of unusual with the new technology, now to these kinds of things which really aren't that different from the problems we always have to face when we ramp up production."

The Dreamliner is the world's first commercial plane made mostly of lighter-weight composite materials. Boeing says the plane cuts fuel consumption by 20 percent and lowers operating costs by 30 percent.

The planes also feature a high ceiling, bigger windows that can darken and softer lighting.

The first Dreamliner version, the 787-8, carries between 210 and 250 passengers. Boeing plans to deliver the 787-9, which is longer and carries between 250 and 290 passengers, by early 2014.

Jenks said Boeing is currently studying a possible 787-10, which would be bigger than the 787-9.

Boeing has received orders for 870 Dreamliners from 59 airlines and is showcasing the plane at this week's Singapore Airshow.

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