

NTSB Investigating Dreamliner Engine Issue

The Associated Press

Boeing Co. says federal regulators are investigating after one of its 787 jets had an engine issue that sparked a fire in South Carolina, but the company remains confident in its safety.

The jet is one of Boeing's most critical products. The company delivered the first 787, known as the Dreamliner, last year following several years of design and production delays. Airlines set record orders for the jet, as its lightweight, high-tech design was expected to offer travelers more comfort, provide airlines significant fuel savings and open up new routes.

Boeing said Sunday that a 787 had an engine issue Saturday while undergoing preflight runway testing in North Charleston, S.C. The Post and Courier newspaper of Charleston reported that debris from the aircraft fell on the runway at Charleston International Airport and sparked a fire in the nearby grass, which closed the airport for more than an hour.

Company spokesman Marc Birtel said the company could not disclose the nature of the engine issue due to rules surrounding the investigation.

"While the investigation is in its early stages, we are unaware of any operational issue that would present concerns about the continued safe operation of in-service 787s powered by GE engines," Boeing said in a statement. "However, should the investigation determine a need to act, Boeing has the processes in place to take action and will do so appropriately."

National Transportation Safety Board spokesman Terry Williams said there was no information available at this time but expects investigators are reviewing the case and may release some details by Monday.

The pressure is on for companies to deliver a successful fuel-efficient plane. Boeing competitor Airbus on Friday announced another delay for its A350 aircraft, which is made with a significant amount of carbon composites and is considered a potential rival.

Boeing is headquartered in Chicago but has a campus in South Carolina where it produces some of the 787 jetliners.

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