

US says Boeing 787's design, manufacture safe

March 19 2014, by Joan Lowy



This photo taken May 29, 2013 shows a line of Boeing 787 jets sitting on the floor nearing completion at the company's production plant in Everett, Wash. Federal aviation officials say Boeing's design and manufacture of its cutting-edge 787 jetliner is safe despite the many plane's many problems since its rollout. A report issued jointly by the Federal Aviation Administration and Boeing on Wednesday says the plane was soundly designed, and that the government had effective processes in place to identify and correct issues that emerged before and after certification. The report makes seven recommendations for further improvements by Boeing and FAA. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

Boeing's design and manufacture of its cutting-edge 787 jetliner is safe

despite the many problems encountered since the plane's rollout, including a fire that forced a redesign of the its batteries, according to a report issued jointly Wednesday by the Federal Aviation Administration and the aircraft maker.

The yearlong review concluded "the aircraft was soundly designed, met its intended [safety](#) level, and that the manufacturer and the FAA had effective processes in place to identify and correct issues that emerged before and after certification," the agency said in a statement.

FAA Administrator Michael Huerta asked for the review in January 2013 after a lithium-ion battery caught fire on a 787 parked at Logan International Airport in Boston. A battery aboard another 787 failed less than two weeks later. Airlines around the world temporarily ground their 787 fleets after the incidents.

The 787, Boeing's newest and most technologically advanced plane, has been hit by a variety of technical and safety glitches since its launch in 2011. It is the first airliner to make extensive use of lithium-ion batteries. Since the FAA didn't have safety regulations for those batteries as installed equipment in planes when the 787 was designed, the agency and Boeing jointly developed the special safety conditions the plane's battery system should meet.

After the battery failures, the FAA was criticized for relying too heavily on designated Boeing employees to ensure the safety of the plane's design and manufacture.

"The (report's) findings validate our confidence in both the design of the airplane and the disciplined process used to identify and correct in-service issues as they arise," said Boeing Commercial Airplanes President and CEO Ray Conner.

A National Transportation Safety Board investigation into the battery fire in Boston is still underway. Wednesday's report was not intended to address the battery's design, but rather the overall safety of Boeing's design and manufacture of the plane and the adequacy of FAA's oversight.

The report also makes several recommendations for improvement by Boeing and FAA. It says Boeing should ensure suppliers are fully aware of their responsibilities, establish a way to ensure suppliers identify realistic risks, and require suppliers to follow industry standards for personnel performing Boeing-required inspections.

The report recommended that the FAA make changes to its oversight of the safety certification of new planes to take into account "new aircraft manufacturing business models."

Boeing extensively outsourced the manufacture of many elements of the 787 to overseas suppliers. Suppliers sometimes then outsourced portions of their work to other companies.

Another report recommendation is that the FAA revise its production approval procedures "to more fully address complex, large-scale manufacturers with extended supply chains."

"The review team identified some problems with the manufacturing process and the way we oversee it, and we are moving quickly to address those problems," Huerta said.

Last month, an Air India Dreamliner, flying nonstop from Sydney to Delhi with 215 people on board, landed in Kuala Lumpur under emergency conditions after its cockpit panels suffered a software malfunction. There was a third battery incident in Japan in January, but Boeing officials said the problem appeared to have been contained by

the new [battery](#) design.

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