

Boeing suspends 737 MAX deliveries as France probes black boxes

March 15 2019, by Heather Scott



The ban on Boeing 737 MAX aircraft spread worldwide after the US joined other countries in grounding the plane

US aerospace giant Boeing said Thursday it was suspending deliveries of its top-selling 737 MAX as French investigators took delivery of the

black boxes from the Ethiopian Airlines crash that killed all 157 passengers and crew.

The MAX has been grounded worldwide following the disaster—the second involving the model in five months—and the fallout has left the company, regulators and airlines scrambling to respond.

"We are pausing the delivery of the 737 MAX until we come up with a solution," a Boeing spokesman said, adding that "we are going to continue the production, but we are assessing our capacities."

France's BEA air safety agency confirmed it has received the black box recorders from the plane, which was just four months old and crashed minutes after takeoff from Addis Ababa on Sunday.

Starting Friday, BEA investigators will try to retrieve information from the cockpit voice and flight data recorders, which were damaged in the disaster.

Thousands of miles (kilometers) away, distraught families were demanding answers as they visited the deep black crater where the plane smashed into a field outside the capital, disintegrating on impact.

Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's largest carrier, sent the black boxes to France because it does not have the equipment to analyze the data.

The information that they contain helps explain 90 percent of all crashes, according to aviation experts.

On Wednesday, US authorities said new evidence showed similarities between the Ethiopia [crash](#) and that of a Lion Air flight in Indonesia in October that killed 189 people.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said findings from the crash site near Addis Ababa and "newly refined satellite data" warranted "further investigation of the possibility of a shared cause for the two incidents."



Forensic experts comb through the dirt for debris at the crash site of the Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft

Boeing shares hit

An FAA emergency order grounded 737 MAX 8 and MAX 9 aircraft until further notice, effectively taking the aircraft out of the skies globally.

The move came after a growing number of airlines and countries had already decided not to fly the planes or ban them from their airspace until it is determined there are no safety issues.

US President Donald Trump told reporters the "safety of the American people and all peoples is our paramount concern."

FAA acting chief Daniel Elwell said the agency had been "working tirelessly" to find the cause of the accident but faced delays because of the damage to the flight data recorders.

The new information shows "the track of that airplane was close enough to the track of the Lion Air flight" to warrant the grounding of the airplanes so more information can be gathered to determine if there is a link, Elwell said Wednesday on CNBC.

Boeing's shares have fallen 12 percent in the days after the crash in Ethiopia, wiping out nearly \$30 billion in value.

The MAX series is Boeing's fastest-selling model, but it is still relatively new with fewer than 500 in service.

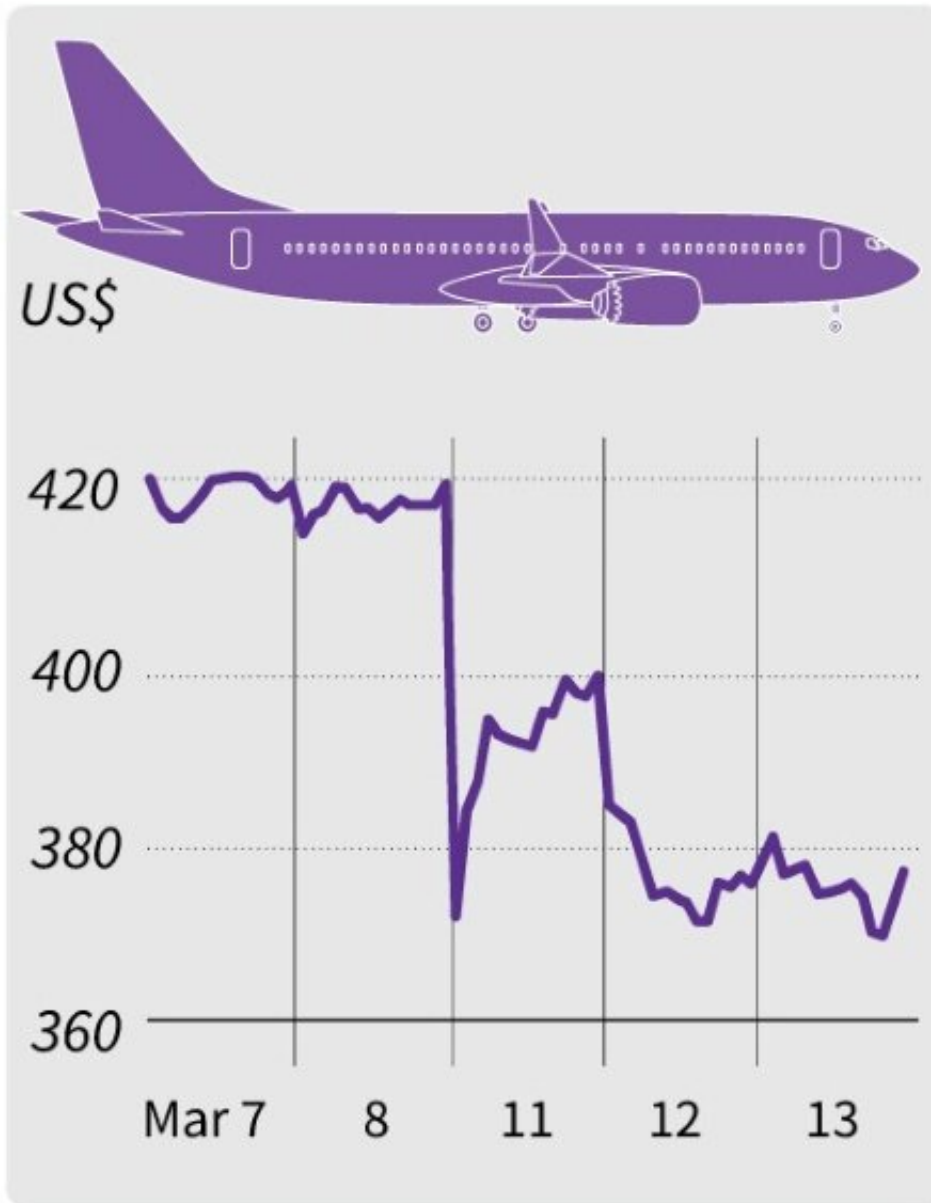
There are 74 registered in the United States and 387 in use worldwide with 59 carriers, according to the FAA.

Pilots' concerns

The accounts of the recent crashes were echoed in concerns registered by US pilots on how the MAX 8 behaves.

Boeing shares

Five days



Source : Google finance

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Chart showing changes in Boeing shares over the past five days.

At least four American pilots complained following the Lion Air crash that the aircraft would suddenly pitch downward shortly after takeoff, according to documents reviewed by AFP on the Aviation Safety Reporting System, a voluntary incident database maintained by NASA.

In two anonymous reports on flights just after the Lion Air disaster, pilots disconnected the autopilot and corrected the plane's trajectory.

It was unclear if US transport authorities review the database or investigated the incidents. However, the FAA said this week it had ordered Boeing to update its flight software and training.

Questions about the Lion Air crash have honed in on an automated stall prevention system, the MCAS, designed to automatically point the plane's nose downwards if it is in danger of stalling.

According to the flight data recorder, the pilots of Lion Air Flight 610 struggled to control the aircraft as the MCAS repeatedly pushed the nose down following takeoff.

The Ethiopian Airlines pilots reported similar difficulties before their aircraft plunged to the ground.

According to The New York Times, air traffic controllers observed the Ethiopian Airlines plane "oscillating up and down by hundreds of feet" prior to the crash.

Speaking in a "panicky voice," the doomed aircraft's captain requested permission to return to the airport almost immediately after takeoff as the plane "accelerated to abnormal speed," the newspaper reported Thursday, citing a person who had reviewed the air traffic

communications.

"Break break, request back to home," the Times quoted the pilot as saying just prior to the crash. "Request vector for landing."

Boeing was criticized after the Lion Air crash for allegedly failing to adequately inform 737 pilots about the functioning of the stall prevention system.

Ethiopian Airlines CEO Tewolde GebreMariam said the doomed flight's captain Yared Mulugeta Getachew, 29, was an experienced aviator with more than 8,000 flight hours.

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