

Tail hazard on some Boeing 737s

NEW YORK, USA: US air-safety regulators said on Monday (15 April) that they would inspect more than 1 000 Boeing 737s for a faulty tail part that could cause a pilot to lose control of the jet.



In a new safety headache for Boeing three months after its 787 Dreamliner was grounded worldwide, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said it would inspect the single-aisle 737s for improperly mounted pins on the tail and replace those found faulty.

The FAA said the airworthiness directive (AD) would take effect on 20 May and "affects 1,050 airplanes of US registry."

"We are issuing this AD to prevent premature failure of the pins, which could cause reduced structural integrity of the horizontal stabiliser to fuselage attachment, resulting in loss of control of the airplane," the FAA said.

The agency notice did not mention any incident so far resulting from the faulty parts.

The affected planes include the -600, -700, -700C, -800, -900, and -900ER models of the 737.

The single-aisle 737 is Boeing's most popular plane, with more than 10,000 of them sold worldwide.

The FAA estimated the operation could cost as much as US\$10m to US airlines alone. Part of the cost may be covered by the manufacturer's warranty.

Boeing said the action had been planned "for some time" after the company issued its first notice of the problem in April 2012.

"This AD is not linked to any in-service event but rather a finding of a surface finish degradation on recently installed attachment pins," Bret Jensen, a Boeing Commercial Airplanes' engineering spokesman, said in an email to *AFP*.

Jensen noted that the directive "does not require immediate action for any currently-flying 737s" because an inspection must first be undertaken and if faulty, the pins will be replaced.

The safety development came as Boeing works with the FAA to get its 787 Dreamliner back in the skies after overheating batteries grounded all the new planes in mid-January.

Boeing conducted a second and final 787 Dreamliner test flight on 5 April to assess the batteries.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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