

Boeing should use 787 delay to re-evaluate outsourcing; SPEEA ready to help return to engineering excellence



SEATTLE – The latest 787 delay is an opportunity for The Boeing Company to reevaluate its failed outsourcing strategy and return to the engineering roots that built past success, according to the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), IFPTE Local 2001.

Issuing the advice, the SPEEA Executive Board on Thursday (Dec. 2) unanimously urged Boeing leaders to use the delay to completely evaluate parts coming from suppliers and where appropriate, bring back work that is better performed by the experienced employees.

“The outsourcing model has not worked,” said Tom McCarty, SPEEA president. “Recently, we’ve seen a few indications the company wants to reemphasize engineering. SPEEA members have the ability and experience to turn things around and protect the Boeing reputation.”

Nearly three years behind schedule, outsourced work on the 787 is at the root of delays. A fire in an electrical panel produced by Hamilton Sundstrand is causing the seventh delay for first delivery. While the length of the latest delay is not yet known, union leaders said this provides an opportunity to identify other aspects of the program that would be done better in house.

In July 2009, problems at Vought resulted in Boeing taking over its plant in North Charleston, S.C. Later that year, Boeing bought out Italian supplier Alenia and took control of Global Aeronautica in North Charleston.

“We wholeheartedly agree with (president of Boeing Commercial Airplanes) Jim Albaugh’s efforts to return to engineering excellence,” said Ray Goforth, SPEEA executive director. “Our members look forward to continued improvements.”

While acknowledging too much was outsourced, some Boeing divisions continue the practice. The company recently announced plans to hire contract pilots to do some customer training and airplane delivery duties of its own airplane manufacturing pilots. The move will have non-Boeing pilots training the pilots of customers. The Boeing pilots recently voted to come into SPEEA as a new bargaining unit.

“The rest of Boeing is busy reversing their 787 outsourcing mistakes,” said Goforth. “It’s bewildering to see Boeing risking its reputation yet again by laying off their own experienced pilots and replacing them with temps. We hope the company reconsiders this decision.”

A local of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), SPEEA represents 24,400 aerospace professionals at Boeing, Spirit AeroSystems in Kansas, Triumph Composite Systems, Inc., in Spokane, Wash., and BAE Systems, Inc., in Irving, Texas.

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