

Boeing's manufacturing pilots and Field Service Reps organizing to join SPEEA



SEATTLE – The pilots who deliver, ferry and train others to fly aircraft built by The Boeing Company are on a path to become the newest bargaining unit of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), IFPTE Local 2001.

The union's governing council voted Thursday, Nov. 11, to begin formal discussions with the Airline Manufacturing Pilots Association (AMPA) to bring the independent bargaining unit into SPEEA. At the same meeting, the SPEEA Council approved a motion to organize Boeing's Field Service Representatives (FSRs) in the United States.

"We're proud the pilots and the FSRs want to join our union," said SPEEA President Tom McCarty. "This widens SPEEA's reach and puts our union on an upward trajectory of representing more professionals at Boeing and in aerospace."

AMPA pilots recently voted to begin discussions with SPEEA. The two unions are scheduling a meeting to work out details of the transition.

The FSRs, who work with customers around the U.S., are collecting union authorization cards in preparation for a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) representation election.

As an existing union with a collective bargaining agreement in place, AMPA's contract will transfer to SPEEA as a new bargaining unit. The 32 pilots have watched their ranks shrink as some pilots moved to other Boeing jobs or retired, but instead of hiring new full-time Boeing pilots, the company is currently hiring temporary (contract) pilots and training them at an undisclosed location. AMPA President David Whitacre said the pilots recognize, and need, the growing influence of SPEEA.

"It's time we become part of a larger, more powerful, organization," Whitacre said. "As pilots delivering Boeing aircraft and providing instruction to customer pilots in their new multi-million dollar airplane, we are the last Boeing person customer pilots see after taking delivery. If we don't do our job right, future Boeing orders could be put in jeopardy. Outsourcing has proved to be a risky strategy, so it's surprising the company is willing to risk its reputation to hire contract pilots. It's contrary to Boeing's stated goal of providing world-class training to our customers."

About 100 Field Service Representatives are at various locations around the United States. As Boeing representatives with customers, they provide expert advice and assistance for fleet service, maintenance and repairs.

“We have fallen too far behind,” said Rich Kozel, Field Service Rep in Tulsa, Okla. “I love my job and I believe that FSRs need to join SPEEA, because we deserve the same respect and guaranteed long-term benefits that union members have.”

SPEEA is regularly approached by employees throughout the aerospace industry who are looking for union representation, said Ray Goforth, SPEEA executive director.

“After completing our vetting process, it was clear to everyone that both the AMPA pilots and FSRs are a natural fit for SPEEA,” Goforth said.

A local of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), SPEEA represents more than 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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