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Uptick in 787 production levels at Boeing trickling down to Spirit AeroSystems

Wichita Business Journal - by [Daniel McCoy](#)

Spirit AeroSystems Inc. says it is ramping up production on Boeing's 787 Dreamliner in advance of that company's plans to begin deliveries of the new aircraft later this year.

Spirit already has delivered 19 of the forward fuselage sections of the plane since **The Boeing Co.** began production of the 787 in 2006. Boeing says it plans to increase production of the aircraft to 10 per month by late 2013.

Spirit also builds the wing pylons and other components of the plane.

But Wichita's largest employer has no immediate plans to hire new workers for the project, saying instead the 787 program will be filled with employees who are shifting from other production lines. The company isn't saying how many have been assigned to the Dreamliner.

"Spirit is ramping up production on the 787 right now at the direction of our customer, and the production line is ready for this increased production activity," says Ken Evans, a Spirit spokesperson.

The increased activity comes as another of Spirit's most important lines in Wichita also could see increased production this year. A Boeing executive said recently the company may look to boost production of its 737. Spirit builds about 70 percent of that aircraft.

The company isn't saying what that would mean to employment, however.

"I can assure you that we will be ready to support our customers' needs regarding (production) rates," he says. "Rates are really a customer matter that we don't discuss publicly, and (we) wouldn't speculate about any changes that may or may not be under consideration."

Spirit employs 10,300 in Wichita.

First Deliveries

The question analysts are asking is whether the 787 will indeed begin deliveries by the end of 2010.

Ray Jaworowski, an aviation analyst with Forecast International, says the 787 seems to have overcome the delays that plagued it for the last two years.

"It looks like they are finally making progress toward getting the aircraft in service," he says.

However, he doesn't believe deliveries will happen until the first quarter of 2011.

"They are looking to make initial deliveries by the end of the year," Jaworowski says. "We are projecting that they will not meet that. ... They won't miss it by much though."

He says it's not unusual for a new airplane to have delays on its way to the market. Delays on the 787, he says, were compounded by the fact that Boeing outsourced so much of the work to companies like Spirit.

Cai von Rumohr, an aviation analyst with **Cowen and Company** LLC, says he expects deliveries to begin by the end of this year.

Meanwhile, Jim Albaugh, head of Boeing's commercial airplanes unit, said earlier this month the company may look this summer to boost production on the 737.



DANIEL MCCOY / WBJ

Boeing's Dreamlifter, which transports pieces of the 787 Dreamliner, picked up last week the 19th forward fuselage Spirit has delivered to Boeing.

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“If they made a decision this June, production (at Boeing) probably wouldn’t go up until the middle of 2011,” von Rumohr says.

He says that means Spirit would see an uptick in 737 work around the end of this year.

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