



AIRBUS A320NEO ENGINE PROBLEMS STILL UNSOLVED: LUFTHANSA

News / Manufacturer



Lufthansa Airlines has announced that it is not ready to put more of AIRBUS GROUP's A320neo aircraft into its commercial service as there are still issues with the aircraft's engines. Lufthansa CEO, Carsten Spohr said at its annual report: "The engine issues are slowly improving, we're not there yet, that's why we have not agreed to take the second aircraft into the fleet."

In January, Lufthansa Airlines stepped up to take the delivery of the first A320neo when Qatar Airways backed out due to ongoing engine issues. Currently, the German airline carrier is only operating the new planes over Germany, where it has large amount of engineers and maintenance team to support the engine issue. The CEO has mentioned that the carrier can fly to other regions too, but it would require more engineers and maintenance teams in those locations as well.

The German carrier is receiving compensation from Airbus until it can make full use of the newer planes. Lufthansa Airlines is due to take delivery of five A320neo aircraft. The Airbus A320neo is powered by a Pure Power PW1100G-JM engine, manufactured by Pratt and Whitney—a subsidiary firm of United Technologies Corporation

The engine is designed to reduce fuel consumption and engine noise. However, the cooling system in the engines have been experiencing problems, taking longer than normal to cool down before the engine can restart. This causes more fuel to be burnt as well.

The engine also had some software issues, as it was sending inaccurate messages to the cockpit, creating additional checks for the plane before take-off. Recently, the engine manufacturer has found another issue with the engine during flight tests; a bearing in the oil pump had sized while carrying out wind-milling tests on the plane.

Pratt and Whitney had announced that its engines had recorded higher reliability at Lufthansa Airlines. According to the Lufthansa CEO, more than 50% of the software issues in the engine have been fixed. In addition, Pratt and Whitney had announced last month that all issues with the A320 neo jetliners are expected to be resolved by April, and would be fixed latest by June this year. Airbus remains heavily dependent upon third-party suppliers for many of its parts.

Why Airbus Needs to Act Quick

Airbus already delayed its delivery of the newer planes several times as the first delivery of the new aircraft was to take place last year. The aircraft manufacturer's reputation is at stake, and if problems in the Pratt and Whitney engines continue, Airbus may switch to engines made by CFM International—a joint venture between General Electric Company and Safran.

According to Airbus CEO and President, Fabrice Bregier, the aircraft manufacturer is hoping to produce 42 A320 neo planes a month and aims to increase production to 60 planes a month in a decade.

Also, if the engine issues are not sorted out soon, Airbus customers may switch to Boeing Co's 737 MAX, which is made to compete with the A320 neo. The 737 Max has recently made successful flight tests and is set to start delivery in 2017.

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