

EPIC END TO 2015 AS E1000 TURBOPROP TAKES FLIGHT

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Bend, Oregon-based Epic Aircraft is ending 2015 on a high note after the maiden flight of its first conforming Epic E1000 flight test aircraft.

The single-engine turboprop dubbed FT1 launched from Bend Municipal Airport on 19 December.

The achievement gives lift to the project that started in 2012, when Epic chief executive Doug King filed an application to certificate an updated, FAA-certified version of the company's LT kit plane.

The flight lasted 20min and threw up no surprises, says Epic chief pilot David Robinson.

Epic E1000 takes flight

Asset Image type unknown

Epic Aircraft

FT1, tail number N331FT, will be joined on the certification campaign by FT2 in March or April, the

company says.

This first example will assess the type's "general handling qualities, operational performance, systems operations in normal mode, failure scenarios, extreme conditions and flight into known icing (FIKI) regulations", the company explains.

FT2 will assess interior and cabin functionality, as well as the "fuel, hydraulic, avionics, navigational and environmental systems".

Epic previously anticipated first flight in June, but the milestone was pushed back by sluggish supply of various parts and components. There were no significant technical issues, says Epic director of sales and marketing Mike Schrader.

"Things don't show up in time; It's just one of those things," he says. "It was almost 100% bringing the parts together."

Those same issues have also bugged final delivery of the remaining Epic LT orders, with the final five aircraft remaining to deliver in 2016. The company stopped selling that model in 2014, but already records 60-plus orders for the improved E1000, Schrader confirms.

"The last airplanes we're building to the same specs as the certified airplane, so parts slow down and parts we didn't have on time slowed those down," he says.

Powered by Pratt & Whitney Canada's PT6A-67A and equipped with the Garmin G950 flight deck, the six-seater all-composite aircraft lists at \$2.95 million, about \$1 million above the LT.

E1000 certification is expected in 2016 with an authorised flight ceiling of 34,000ft and full-fuel payload of 508kg (1,120lbs), the company says.

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