

SAFRAN SAYS OUTPUT ON TARGET AS AIRBUS GETS LEAP ENGINE

News / Manufacturer



CFM International, a joint-venture between France's Safran and General Electric of the United States, has delivered the first LEAP-1A engine to be used in the Airbus A320neo jetliner, Safran said on Friday.

The delivery is a key milestone for 42-year-old CFM, an unusual French-American venture which has survived decades of trade tensions between the two countries but which now faces its steepest ever challenge in raising production.

CFM has sold 10,000 of the engines which compete with United Technologies to provide power for an upgraded version of the Airbus narrow body jet family and will also exclusively power the competing airplane, the Boeing 737 MAX.

The CFM-powered version of the A320neo is expected to enter service at mid-year with an unidentified airline.

Speaking at a handover ceremony for the first non-test version of the engine in Toulouse, Safran engines chief Olivier Andries said output was on target and that CFM would produce 100 LEAP engines this year and 500 next year. The engine would be introduced with six airlines this year.

CFM aims to produce a record 2,000 LEAP engines in 2020.

Andries paid tribute to CFM's founders: a German-born fighter engineer who fought for the allies and was made a U.S. citizen by an act of Congress, Gerhard Neumann, and a French resistance hero called Rene Ravaud who lost an arm when the British bombed Brest in western France.

The first Boeing 737 MAX made its maiden flight with LEAP-1B engines in February. It is due to enter service next year.

The Airbus A320neo entered service with Pratt & Whitney engines in January but deliveries have been delayed by engine software and hardware problems.

Airbus suffered a setback in February when the larger A321neo, equipped with CFM engines, suffered a tail strike during testing in February.

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