

Boeing says nearly 50 planes immobilized globally due to wing cracks



Washington, November 1 (RHC)-- Global pressure has mounted on U.S. aircraft-manufacturing giant Boeing after the company admitted that cracks had been found in a number of its popular planes following worldwide inspections.

The crisis-hit carrier faced fresh safety concerns on Thursday, as a spokesman officially acknowledged that up to 50 of its 737 NG fleets had cracks in the “pickle fork” — a section of the plane that links the wings to the fuselage and manages the air pressure and aerodynamic forces.

The spokesman said that less than five percent of the 1,000 aircraft inspected at this stage had cracks and had been “immobilized for repairs.”

The announcement came after the Australian airline Qantas reportedly grounded a Boeing 737 NG due to a structural crack, and was speeding up inspection of 32 more planes. “We never use an airplane until it brings all the security guarantees,” said Chris Snook, the Australian company's chief engineer.

South Korea also said nine planes had been stalled in early October, including five operated by Korean Air.

The US Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) announced it had ordered an inspection of some Boeing 737 NG after the discovery of "structural cracks" on a copy in China. The 737 NG is the predecessor of the 737 MAX single-aisle.

Boeing's profits more than halved in the last three months as the company struggled to recover from two fatal crashes of its top-selling 737 Max aircraft. The FAA has issued an urgent directive for all airlines to check their 737s that had completed more than 30,000 cycles for pickle fork cracks.

In recent months, Boeing's reputation has been shattered by two 737 MAX accidents that claimed the lives of 346 people in Indonesia and Ethiopia.

Investigators from the Indonesian National Transportation Safety Committee in Jakarta said systemic design flaws in the 737 Max were compounded by errors by the plane's pilots, who had not been sufficiently instructed on how to handle malfunctions in the 737 Max's MCAS anti-stall system.

The anti-stall system on the MAX models has also been blamed in large part for the Ethiopian Airlines tragedy. The 737 MAXs have been grounded for more than seven months.

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