

10,000 and climbing

Total Seattle single-aisle commercial jet production passes 5-digit mark

By Michael Lombardi

A production run of 10,000 airplanes is one of the most notable milestones in aviation history, and on Aug. 4, Boeing Commercial Airplanes achieved this when a Southwest Airlines Next-Generation 737-700 was celebrated as the 10,000th Boeing single-aisle commercial jet to be built in the Seattle area.

The milestone is a rare feat today, but it was somewhat more common during World War II when Boeing, Douglas Aircraft and North American Aviation accomplished amazing production numbers while building aircraft for the “Arsenal of Democracy.” In Wichita, Kan., Boeing built more than 10,000 “Stearman” Kaydet primary trainers. Boeing, Douglas and Lockheed-Vega teamed up to build more than 10,000 B-17 Flying Fortresses. Douglas Aircraft built more than 10,000 C-47s (military variant of the DC-3), and North American Aviation, at its Inglewood, Calif., and Dallas plants, produced more than 13,000 T-6/SNJ Texan trainers as well as more than 15,000 of the P-51 Mustang fighter.

More recently, airplane production runs are limited and it takes a family of similar airplanes to reach the 10,000 milestone. The Commercial Airplanes 10,000 milestone began in October 1958 when the first 707 was rolled out at the Renton, Wash., site. It was followed by an unmatched production run of single-aisle commercial jets.



PHOTO: The 10,000th Seattle-built Boeing single-aisle commercial jet, a Southwest Airlines Next-Generation 737-700, takes off from Boeing Field. JIM ANDERSON/BOEING

Seattle-built single-aisle commercial jets

707/720s	727s	737s	757s
1,010	1,832	6,108	1,050

The Boeing total is even more impressive with the addition of nearly 3,000 single-aisle jets built in Long Beach, Calif., by Boeing heritage company Douglas and McDonnell Douglas.



And the run continues as a Next-Generation 737 is added to the total every day. In fact, the Boeing total for single-aisle commercial jets is even more impressive with the addition of Boeing heritage company Douglas and the legendary Douglas Commercial “DC” jets built in Long Beach, Calif. Single-aisle jets built by Douglas/McDonnell Douglas include 556 DC-8s, 976 DC-9s, 1,191 MD-80s, 116 MD-90s and topped off with 156 MD-95s that were renamed the Boeing 717-200 after McDonnell Douglas and Boeing merged in 1997.

All but the Douglas/McDonnell Douglas planes were built at the Renton site with the exception of the initial production of 271 737s, which were built at Boeing Field. To this list the Renton factory can add a production run of 732 military C/KC-135s, 878 C/KC-97s, 1,129 B-29As, 24 TB-50Hs, the lone XPBB-1 Ranger and, of course, the Dash 80, prototype for the 707 and KC-135. These make the Renton site not only the world’s most productive site for single-aisle commercial jets but also one of the largest producers of large multi-engine airplanes in history. ■

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PHOTOS: (TOP) The first major milestone for Boeing commercial jets, which were all single-aisle at the time, was reached on June 5, 1967, when Boeing delivered No. 1,000, a 707-320, to American Airlines. Then–Boeing President William Allen (at the lectern) presided over the delivery ceremony. **BOEING ARCHIVES**

(ABOVE) Previously, only wartime aircraft production lines reached the five-digit mark. Here, Boeing employees sign their names to the 10,000th Kaydet trainer built by Boeing in Wichita, Kan., during World War II. **BOEING ARCHIVES**