

NEWS RELEASE

American inducts first CFM56-5B engine

12/4/2018

Last November, American announced it would bring CFM56-5B engine maintenance work to Tech Ops – Tulsa. The work had previously been completed by GE before that contract expired in October 2018. Now, one year after the announcement, the team is celebrating as the first -5B engine was inducted in the Tulsa engine shop Nov. 15.

American insources more maintenance work than any other airline. Bringing this work to Tulsa is a testament to the hard work and talent of the mechanics and support personnel in the engine shop and their goal to be the very best in the industry. Over the last several years, they've sharpened their skills on the maintenance of the CFM56-7B engine, which powers more than 300 of our Boeing 737 aircraft. They took the turn-around time for -7B engine maintenance from 76 days to a world-class average of 53 days — a timeframe they've maintained for three years.

In the year since the announcement, the engine shop has stayed busy prepping for the -5B. Approximately 85 team members have been added to the shop to handle the new engine fleet, along with the -7B volume expected next year for regular maintenance. Existing team members bid their schedules to perform the new work, which led to openings in other workgroups, and eventually a need to hire externally to fill aircraft cleaner positions. It all builds on the goal of providing long-term, high-volume, sustainable work for Tech Ops – Tulsa and our Maintenance team.

A team was established to look at tooling — what could be used between the two engines and if there was enough of it, and what new tooling would be needed to perform the work. The engine test cell also required an upgrade to run the -5B.

Another team was focused on training. They looked at the differences between the -5B and -7B engines and developed courses to train their colleagues about each engine and the differences between the two. General training for the engine shop will be ongoing to bring team members in the shop up to speed.

"This work is our future, and we can only grow from here. The team has worked really hard to get this, and now that's paying off for them," said Wayne Thomas, Director of Engines.

The -5B powers 151 of American's Airbus A320 family aircraft. The Tulsa engine shop expects to induct three more -5B engines before the end of 2018 and is estimating 30 engine shop visits for 2019.

And that world-class turn-around time? It's going to take a little time for the -5B as the team works to validate that things like parts, components, tooling procedures, and processes are fine tuned. Other teams outside the engine shop, including Production Control, Supply Chain, Quality Control, Engineering and Facilities Maintenance, are playing an integral part in ensuring the -5B's success and are working closely with the shop.

Jim Blesi, Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT), was one of the first team members who opened the -7B engine shop in 2005. Now, he is reliving the journey all over again with the -5B as he lends his expertise and training. "You don't realize what a big project it is to get ready for something like this, especially with things like tooling," he said. "Brand new tooling has a lot of issues to work through — the tolerance is tight and you have to spend a lot of time breaking it in. But it's a challenge we're ready for."

The engine shop knows with the right support, they can turn the -5B into another world-class maintenance milestone for American. Jim Bressers, another AMT, sees this as the tip of the iceberg on what could be next. "It's great that leadership has the confidence we can do this job," he said. "Insourcing this is invigorating. Now, it's up to us to prove they made the right decision."

AMTs Ed Rice and Dave Devries work on the CFM56-5B

AMT Dave Devries works on the -5B

From left, Jim Blesi, AMT; Ed Mason, Crew Chief; Jim Bressers, AMT; Larry Waldon, supervisor with the CFM56-5B