

Going Green with Silver Eagle

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Every eight to 10 years, commercial aircraft require a paint refresh to keep them operating smoothly and reliably. By that time, on average, a plane will have flown 13,000 flights, taking on a lot of wear and tear. It's hard to believe that the current American Airlines livery, first introduced in 2013, is quickly approaching that milestone.

Starting this month, as aircraft approach their regularly scheduled paint refresh date, American will begin repainting them with a new, non-mica gray paint that looks nearly identical to what is soaring across the skies today, but is less expensive, lighter, more fuel efficient and better for the environment.

The repaint will update American's current livery with a new, mica-free paint color created specifically for the airline: Silver Eagle™.

Paint by the numbers: American's Boeing 737-800 fleet

"We had an opportunity to do things differently as planes approached their scheduled repaint date," said Jill Naden, 787 Engineer at American. "We looked at this very carefully and figured out an alternative that would be less expensive, and importantly, better for the environment. By moving to Silver Eagle, our fleet of airplanes will burn approximately 1 million fewer gallons of fuel per year. We estimate this alone will reduce American's carbon emissions by 9,525 metric tonnes per year once the fleet is repainted."

The mica layer adds about 62 pounds to the weight of a Boeing 737-800. American started 2021 with 282 Boeing 737-800 aircraft in the fleet, with each aircraft flying up to six trips per day. By removing the mica layer, the airline is

expected to save nearly 300,000 gallons of fuel annually in this fleet type alone. In addition to the reduction in emissions resulting from removing the mica layer, American will also use fewer chemicals when painting and repairing aircraft.

American will gradually introduce the refreshed livery beginning with the 737-800 fleet. New aircraft on order are expected to be delivered to American with the updated look in the second half of 2021.

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The 16 colors in American's livery are painstakingly applied by hand from nose to tail. Stencils are used to ensure a clean finish, but no decals are used in the new painting process.

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To prepare aircraft for painting, existing paint must be completely removed down to the shiny metal skin underneath.

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After 12 days in the paint shop, American's first 737-800 to be repainted with Silver Eagle non-mica paint is ready for departure.

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When maintenance work requiring paint was performed, the gray paint sometimes clashed. With Silver Eagle, fashion faux pas are a thing of the past.