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# Southwest Airlines Continues Inspections of 737-300 Fleet, Works to Minimize Customer Inconvenience From Flight Cancellations

## Carrier Returns 19 Inspected Planes to Fleet So Far; Finds Cracks on Two Planes Requiring Additional Repairs

DALLAS, April 3, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Southwest Airlines (NYSE: LUV) today provided several updates related to the ongoing inspections of a subset of its Boeing 737 fleet:

- In cooperation with Boeing, an additional inspection program was set up for a subset of the Southwest 737-300. The inspection involved a non-destructive test (NDT) in the form of High-Frequency Eddy current of the aircraft skin. This test is designed to detect any subsurface fatigue in the skin that is not visible to the eye.
- As of 4 p.m. Central time Sunday, 19 planes had undergone the intense inspection with no findings, and those planes have been returned to service.
- In two other airplanes, the testing did detect small, subsurface cracks. Further evaluation and potential repairs will be necessary before those planes are returned to service.
- Inspections of the remaining aircraft in the sub-fleet (79 total) will continue for the next few days. As inspections are completed with no findings, those planes will continue to be put back into service today and Monday. The airline anticipates completing the inspections by late Tuesday. The 79 aircraft designated for the additional inspections were designed differently in the manufacturing process.
- Southwest continues its cooperation to the ongoing investigation being led by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) into the cause of the hole in the airplane which diverted to Yuma, Ariz., on Friday, April 1.
- Sunday, Southwest expects to cancel approximately 300 flights while the inspections are ongoing. Customers should continue to check flight status at [www.southwest.com](http://www.southwest.com) for any changes to their flights as a result of inspections and out-of-service aircraft.

"I could not be more proud of our Maintenance and Engineering professionals who supported Boeing and the FAA in the establishment of these new inspection procedures," said Mike Van de Ven, Southwest's Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. "Boeing has since identified an inspection program for this section of the aircraft. Based on this incident and the additional findings, we expect further action from Boeing and the FAA for operators of the 737-300 fleet worldwide."

Southwest operates a total 737 fleet of 548 planes. The fleet is constantly undergoing rigorous checks and inspections as directed by the FAA and Boeing, the aircraft manufacturer. These checks and inspections are dictated by number of cycles (a cycle is a takeoff and landing) and on a calendar basis as well.

"Our highest priority is the safety of our Employees and Customers," Van de Ven said. "Prior to the event regarding Flight 812, we were in compliance with the FAA-mandated and Boeing-recommended structural inspection requirements for that aircraft. What we saw with Flight 812 was a new and unknown issue. We regret any Customer inconveniences as a result of the inspections currently underway. Delays and cancelations are never the preference, however we are taking every precaution we can to ensure that our operation is safe."

SOURCE Southwest Airlines