CARRIERS PROTEST AS EASA ORDERS FASTER A320 PITOT RETROFIT

News / Airlines



European safety regulators have halved the compliance period for replacing pitot tubes on Airbus A320-family jets, after rejecting complaints about the shorter deadline.

The revised schedule cuts the compliance time from 48 months to 24 months, bringing the required completion date forward to 12 November 2016.

Orders to replace the pitot tubes followed concerns that some Thales-made devices were not performing adequately in high-altitude icing conditions.

The European Aviation Safety Agency says it is shortening the deadline after analysis determined that the compliance time “has to be reduced in relation to the risk assessment”.

But this has met objections from several operators. British Airways has told EASA that it is

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“concerned” with the change, not just from the point of view of retrofitting 130 aircraft but with the fact that it means “eliminating the possibility” of fitting newer-specification pitot probes available from the third quarter of 2016.

Air Canada says it had been planning to commence modifications next month, timing them to coincide with C-checks, which would have enabled it to finish a year before the previous compliance deadline.

It states that this can no longer be achieved within the C-check timetable, leaving about half its fleet needing to be modified during line-maintenance visits.

“[This] will put a major burden on our operations,” says the carrier in a formal response to the EASA revision.

Russian carrier S7 Airlines’ engineering arm has told EASA that, given its fleet of 42 A320-family jets, the change is “not optimal”, and proposed that the 24-month period be counted from the date of issue of the revised directive.

EASA has not amended the directive despite the protests.

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