



AIRCRAFT MECHANICS FRATERNAL ASSOCIATION

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CONTINUING MAINTENANCE LAPSES BY SOUTHWEST AIRLINES IS GROWING CONCERN TO AIRCRAFT MECHANICS UNION

CENTENNIAL, CO – November 12, 2019 – Recent reporting on Southwest Airlines 88 Skyline Aircraft indicates that the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) internal Office of Audit and Evaluation raised issues with the carrier’s failure to ensure conformity with all FAA airworthiness requirements, which is a growing cause of concern to the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA).

“We commend the Chicago Business Journal, Reuters, and Wall Street Journal for bringing to the nation’s attention Southwest Airlines’ significant lapses in maintenance of its aircraft. In our view, these lapses occurred because of Southwest’s choice to prioritize on-time performance over safety,” stated AMFA National Director Bret Oestreich.

Oestreich points out that the company itself has confessed to a decline in maintenance and safety culture, referring to a December 6, 2017, statement made by Southwest Vice President of Operations Landon Nitschke, who said, “sometimes we hide our compliance issues under the Warrior Spirit.”

Despite this unsettling confession, Southwest continues to engage in conduct that accelerates the degradation of maintenance standards.

“We have the fewest mechanics per aircraft of any major carrier,” notes Mr. Oestreich. “And these beleaguered few are subject to pressure from Southwest management to get the planes out and meet Southwest’s schedule. When this pressure rises to a coercive level, safety is compromised.”

In an October 30, 2019, letter to FAA Administrator Stephen Dickson, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Chairman Roger Wicker demanded additional information on the airworthiness of the 88 Skyline aircraft in Southwest Airline’s fleet. “This is troubling and also corresponds to concerns that have been brought to my attention by whistleblowers as a part of my investigation into aviation safety,” stated Wicker.

There have been multiple whistleblower complaints filed by AMFA’s members. A 2017 FAA report concerning Southwest’s operations found “all of the mechanics interviewed except two felt pressure,” to overlook potential safety issues. According to the investigators, there was a “fear of threats or reprisal” that could lead to a “degraded level of safety.”

“Southwest continues to pursue federal litigation with the goal of suppressing Southwest AMT’s reports of maintenance discrepancies,” says Oestreich. “AMFA has raised our concerns to Southwest Airlines multiple times regarding safety issues and have been ignored. Although we have yet to be briefed by Southwest Airlines on the Skyline issue, we stand ready to work with the carrier towards creating a new safety culture — one that emphasizes collaboration and rewards safety instead of maintaining an uncooperative approach and single-minded focus on profits.”

“AMFA stands squarely behind the courageous aircraft mechanics who risk management retaliation to safeguard our nation’s aircraft,” Oestreich stated. “Without these brave mechanics, the flying public and the carrier themselves would be deprived of the mechanic’s significant contribution to safety.”

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The Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association is a craft oriented, independent aviation union. AMFA represents licensed and unlicensed technicians and related employees actively involved in the aviation industry. These technician and related employees work directly on aircraft and/or components, support equipment, and facilities. AMFA is committed to elevating the professional standing of technicians and to achieving progressive improvements in wages, benefits, and working conditions of the skilled craftsmen and women it represents. For more information about AMFA visit www.amfanational.org.