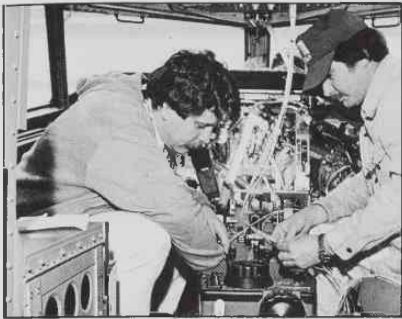


737s: all bodies now widebodies



Installing electrical wires for new avionics components in the cockpit are Line Avionics technicians Larry Howell and Elwyn White.



John Wiley, Maintenance cleaner, brushes out dust as well as other debris from the wainscot panels.



Mark Richardson (left) and Donna Bishop, Engineering, provide wiring diagrams for aircraft electrical modifications.

An aggressive modification program, begun three years ago to update Piedmont's 737 fleet, will conclude this month when N736 receives a widebody interior and facelift and is rolled out the hangar door.

The modification program, begun in June 1978, has involved hundreds of employees and many hours of work, and it's a program in which employees, especially those in Maintenance, have much satisfaction.

"Our employees are obviously proud of it," George Reynolds, staff vice president, Maintenance and Engineering, said. "It has been an aggressive program to present us as 'Up and Coming'. It has enabled us to show ourselves in a more dignified manner — an image of a first-class operation."

Planning for the modification project began in Production and Control.

"We, along with Engineering, planned and produced a work package — a roadmap for our mechanics to follow — and, of course, we had a lot of help from our Boeing representative," said Houston Symmes, Maintenance Planning.

"We're the first airline to purchase Boeing's widebody kit and to produce our own work package program."

The 737 currently undergoing modification is the 22nd and final one to go through the widebody program. This 737, purchased in 1968, has flown 32,649 hours and has completed 50,345 takeoffs and landings.

"After modification, this plane will look as good as new again," Reynolds said.

"The average cost for the widebody interior is \$600,000 and takes about 5,000 man-hours. Approximately 11,000 additional hours are spent on structural inspection, repairs, and the paint job."

The new interiors have increased the number of seats from 94 to 112 and added new carryall bins. The result is a roomier and more comfortable atmosphere for passengers. On the exterior, the engines have been upgraded and additional thrust made possible by going from JT8D-7 to -9.

The total time for the work has averaged six weeks for each aircraft.

The modification program has included many support areas. The aircraft had to be scheduled in and parts routed. Avionics/Electrical installed and connected all new wiring for the new interiors, and the Paint Shop painted the exterior. The Accessory Shop handled a wide variety of tasks while fabric and fiberglass were being replaced, and

sheet metal and structural repair, completed.

All this was done to improve the quality of service Piedmont offers its customers and to heighten the Company's image as a first-class operation.

Passengers have taken notice. For example, in one recent complimentary letter a passenger wrote, "I personally could not help but marvel at the appearance of your aircraft, so clean and new."

Another said, "I have flown mostly on your 737 aircraft. They seem to have a roomier appearance inside the cabin..." And, finally, "Your planes were cleaner than most airlines, your facilities just as good."

Maintenance is completing the widebody program this month, but another ambitious undertaking is in the works.

"In September, a structural maintenance program will begin," Reynolds said. "We want to improve the longevity of the fleet, to extend the lifetime of each aircraft. We want our planes to continue to be a source of pride for both ourselves and our passengers."



Stanley Vance (foreground) and David Christian, Paint Shop mechanics, strip paint from around the windows which have been covered to avoid contact with the stripping solution. Special care must be taken because the solution can damage the plexiglass windows and rubber seals.



Making replacement seat covers in the Fabric Shop are (l to r) Gene Pruitt, P.D. Falls, Don Patterson, Bud Davis, and Dwight Long.



Sheet metal repairs in the flapwell area of the wing are made by mechanics Steve Guidry (foreground) and Vernon (Buzz) Basham.

What does the widebody program mean to our passengers?

"I think it picks up our business, makes us look more modern. It gives passengers more of a feeling of security."

Steve Guidry

"It gives us a lot more room overhead. People seem to carry on more luggage, and the new interiors provide more space."

L.V. Brown

"It gives the perspective of being bigger inside. If your plane is clean and shiny on the outside but worn and rather dirty on the inside, passengers get a bad impression. I think passengers usually judge us on two points — cleanliness and friendliness. Both help to make them feel safe."

G.R. Griggs



Removing the old interior of the 737 aircraft are Line Maintenance mechanics Robert Burke (left) and Garland Griggs (foreground). At right, David Christian.



Repairing of the engine nose cowl is done by Harold Wooten (left) and Dewey Meadows, Sheet Metal mechanics.