

Boeing urges global grounding of 777s after United suffers engine failure

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Dhaka: Boeing on February 21 said that all 128 of its 777 aircraft powered by a particular Pratt and Whitney engine model should be grounded globally until the Federal Aviation Administration determines the best way to inspect the engines. The aerospace giant issued its recommendation a day after a 777 operated by United Airlines suffered a dramatic engine failure over Colorado.

After the incident of United Airlines, the head of the FAA said he was requiring “immediate or stepped-up inspections” of planes equipped with the Pratt and Whitney PW4000 family of engines, which are used only on 777s. Lion share of Boeing 777s are equipped with engines made by GE Aviation.

United, after the incident, said it would temporarily ground the two dozen 777s powered by that Pratt and Whitney model that it had been flying. The National Transportation Safety Board is leading an investigation into the crash.

“While the NTSB investigation is ongoing, we recommended suspending operations of the 69 in-service and 59 in-storage 777s powered by Pratt & Whitney 4000-112 engines until the FAA identifies the appropriate inspection protocol,” Boeing said in a statement.

Earlier on February 21, the FAA's counterpart in Japan ordered airlines there to stop flying 777s equipped with those engines, affecting 32 jets operated by All Nippon Airways and Japan Airlines, a move that Boeing said it supported. The only other country with carriers that fly that plane-and-engine combination is South Korea, according to the FAA.

"We reviewed all available safety data following yesterday's incident," the agency's administrator, Steve Dickson, said in a statement on February 1. "Based on the initial information, we concluded that the inspection interval should be stepped up for the hollow fan blades that are unique to this model of engine, used solely on Boeing 777 airplanes."

Dickson said the FAA was working with its counterparts worldwide and said its safety experts were meeting "into the evening" with Pratt and Whitney and Boeing to address the required inspections. Pratt and Whitney, a division of the aerospace and military giant Raytheon Technologies that makes jet and helicopter engines.

Soon after United Flight 328 departed Denver for Hawaii on February 20, the right engine failed, shedding debris across three neighbourhoods before the plane returned safely to Denver, according to authorities. None of the 229 passengers or 10 crew members were injured.