

US could approve Boeing 737 MAX before mid-year: source

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US air safety regulators could clear the Boeing 737 MAX to return to service before mid-year, a person close to the process said Friday.

Boeing shares rallied following a CNBC report that the Federal Aviation Administration signaled to [airlines](#) that the MAX could be approved to resume flights before mid-2020.

A source close to the process confirmed the report to AFP.

The plane has been grounded since March following two deadly crashes. On Tuesday, Boeing announced that it did not expect to win regulatory approval until mid-2020.

An FAA spokesman reiterated that the agency has set no timeframe for certification, but indicated the process has moved forward from December.

"While the FAA continues to follow a thorough, deliberate process the agency is pleased with Boeing's progress in recent weeks toward achieving key milestones," the FAA spokesman said.

In December, the FAA publicly castigated Boeing for targeting an unrealistic return to service timeframe that seemed to be "designed to force FAA into taking quicker action."

A spokesman for American Airlines confirmed that the carrier had discussed the MAX with the FAA but declined to comment on the conversation.

United Airlines and Southwest Airlines, two other US carriers that fly the MAX, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Boeing suspended production on the MAX this month but Chief

Executive David Calhoun said this week the company plans to begin ramping up 737 MAX production ahead of winning regulatory approval to resume service on the plane.

Calhoun, who began as CEO earlier this month, has highlighted restoring Boeing's reputation with regulators, customers and other stakeholders as an imperative as he tries to the turn the company around.

Boeing shares rose 1.8 percent to \$323.62 in afternoon trading.

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