

FAA to audit Boeing's 'minor' design changes after latest MAX issue

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FAA chief Steve Dickson undertook a test flight of a Boeing 737 MAX prior to recertifying the aircraft late last year

US air safety regulators are auditing Boeing's procedures for making "minor" design changes to planes in the wake of the latest problem with

its troubled 737 MAX, regulators said Thursday.

The Federal Aviation Administration's review aims to help Boeing identify "areas where it can improve its processes," an agency spokeswoman said.

"These initiatives are part of our commitment to continually evaluating and improving our oversight of all aspects of aviation safety, recognizing that catching errors at the earliest possible point enhances what is already the world's safest form of transportation."

The audit is in addition to the agency's ongoing investigation into the issue that led to grounding of more than 100 MAX planes after Boeing earlier this month alerted 16 airlines of an electrical problem with some of the planes.

Boeing remain under heavy scrutiny after two fatal crashes that led to a 20-month grounding of the MAX jets.

A congressional investigation also blasted the FAA for "grossly insufficient oversight" of Boeing throughout the certification of the MAX.

The agency recertified the aircraft in November after a lengthy review that included a [test flight](#) piloted by FAA director Steve Dickson.

Boeing said it is working with regulators on the latest MAX issue and that it appreciates "ongoing engagement with, and direction from, the FAA as we continuously improve safety and quality in our processes," a company spokeswoman said.

The FAA on Wednesday released an airworthiness directive that requires modifications to ensure "sufficient electrical grounding" for [plane](#)

equipment and "address the unsafe condition on these products."

The Boeing spokeswoman said the company has been working closely on two service bulletins to address the problem. Once the FAA signs off on the bulletins, Boeing will provide them to airlines "with detailed instructions on completing the work to return their airplanes to service," she said.

The problem, which surfaced during the [manufacturing process](#), has so far not significantly affected airlines given the still-lackluster travel volume during Covid-19, but demand is expected to pick up significantly this summer.

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