

EU orders Airbus A350 inspections after Cathay engine fire

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Inspections found defective engine fuel lines requiring replacement on 15 of Cathay's A350s powered by Rolls-Royce engines, forcing the cancellation of dozens of flights in Asia.

Europe's aviation safety agency said Thursday it will require inspection of part of the fleet of Airbus A350 wide-body jets in operation after an

engine fire on a Cathay Pacific flight.

Rolls-Royce, which makes the engines on Cathay's A350s, confirmed it was launching "a one-time precautionary engine inspection program" and was "working very closely" with the EU agency.

Hong Kong-based Cathay, one of the largest operators of the long-haul A350 jetliner, grounded 48 planes for checks on Monday after a Zurich-bound flight had to return to the city shortly after take-off.

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) said Thursday that the A350-1000 aircraft suffered an [engine failure](#) due to a high pressure fuel hose failing.

EASA said there was an "in-flight engine fire shortly after take-off", which was "promptly detected and extinguished".

The agency said the incident was the subject of a safety investigation led by the Air Accident Investigation Authority of Hong Kong (AAIA).

In its emergency directive addressed to airlines, the EASA mandated inspections on A350-1000s which are powered by XWB-97 engines.

There are 86 such planes in service worldwide, according to the EASA.

The move does not affect the A350-900 model, of which there are 526 planes in operation according to Airbus figures from July.

The inspections, to check for damage of fuel hose connections inside engines, "need to take place over the next 3-30 days" according to an EASA statement.

"This action is a precautionary measure," executive director Florian

Guillermet said.

The agency said earlier Thursday that the directive would only apply to European airlines that fly the aircraft, with regulators in other countries free to decide whether or not to enforce it.

Rolls-Royce engine inspections

The Cathay incident prompted other airlines in the region to carry out similar checks on their A350-900 and A350-1000 models, which are powered by Rolls-Royce Trent XWB-84 and XWB-97 engines, respectively.

Rolls-Royce said Thursday it was launching "a one-time precautionary engine inspection program" which may apply "to a portion of the A350 fleet".

A source told AFP that Airbus and Rolls-Royce have told airlines that only A350-1000s powered by XWB-97 engines are concerned by the problem.

Airbus did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The first A350 was delivered to Qatar Airways at the end of 2014. Since the end of the production of the jumbo A380, the A350 is Airbus's largest aircraft. The largest version, the 1000, can carry nearly 500 passengers.

The A350-1000 can travel more than 16,000 kilometers (nearly 10,000 miles) in one hop. That will be pushed to nearly 18,000 km in the "Sunrise" version ordered by Australian airline Qantas to fly directly between Sydney and London.

A competitor to Boeing's 787 Dreamliner, more than 1,300 A350s have been ordered. Airbus figures from the end of July show 613 have been delivered to airlines.

Qatar Airways is the biggest operator of the 1000 version, with 24 in its fleet, followed by Cathay Pacific and British Airways, which both operate 18.

Cathay, which cancelled 90 flights after the Monday incident, said Wednesday it expects to resume full operations on Saturday after having already fixed six of the 15 airplanes it found needed to have fuel lines replaced.

Emirates airlines CEO Tim Clark expressed concern last year about the durability of the Trent XWB-97 engines, prompting Rolls-Royce to indicate it would work to boost their performance.

Shares in Airbus shed 1.2 percent in late afternoon trading while the Paris CAC 40 index was 0.6 percent lower. Rolls-Royce shares fell 1.4 percent while London's FTSE 100 index was off 0.1 percent.

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