

## **Inflight Entertainment (IFE) Timeline and Benefits of Commonality**

In order to explain the timelines suggested in the air carrier offer on IFE, carriers and OEMs provide background and offer an example of the timeframe required for IFE programs.

One major U.S. airline reported its timeline for IFE as follows: The aircraft order was placed with the OEMs in mid-2011. Marketing specifications for new Airbus and Boeing narrowbody aircraft were issued in late 2011 based on the IFE catalogs available from the OEMs at the time. The carrier was required by the OEMs to select its IFE supplier in early 2012 and the first aircraft was delivered the third quarter of 2013. It is worth noting that the project described has IFE systems are capable of supplying delivering subtitles, including captions in bitmap and multiple soundtrack selection including audio descriptions.

That carrier project outlined is locked in via contract with the IFE supplier and OEM to those marketing specifications and selection of vendor for these multi-million dollar systems for all of the aircraft ordered. The carrier is scheduled to continue taking delivery of aircraft into 2018 based on these specifications and equipment. As part of that original aircraft order, that carrier has the opportunity to procure additional aircraft that would use the same specifications under contract to support marketing and common customer service, training and maintenance among other reasons. The carrier further reports that a typical twin aisle aircraft program timeline would be longer than that described above (generally timeframes for twin aisle are longer than for single-aisle). A second major carrier verified that its own timeframes are similar to those described by its competitor.

An OEM notes that the timeline for adding new parts is lengthy within the OEM, and that this is just one link in the chain of steps as the IFE system affects a significant number of areas in the aircraft that must be redesigned and re-certified. These areas include but not limited to: seats; floor coverings; system wiring; remotely located IFE system boxes; and video control centers. Seat certification alone can be over a two-year process. Carriers purchase costly new aircraft with the intent to put them directly into service. As such, the IFE system is purchased and the OEM installs that IFE system into aircraft providing a fully certified and operational IFE system at the time of new aircraft delivery. The carriers do not purchase new aircraft and then tear them apart to install the IFE system themselves. The fact that it is the OEM that installs the IFE system does not shorten the time timeframes as described above.

### **IFE Equipment Commonality Ensures Efficiencies**

Avoiding the introduction of discrepancies among the type of IFE equipment included as part of an airline's fleet, or installed aboard otherwise-identical aircraft models, produces "commonality" benefits that are unique to the IFE context. It allows for commonality in the software by which the IFE systems are operated. This reduces the cost of software updates and the timeframes required for software/update loading, deployment and bug fixes. It also cuts the costs of IFE media content procurement and deployment. Airlines must pay separately by media set variation for content licensing and must be prepared to support varied content staging and loading requirements for the varying systems each time media content is refreshed. Additionally, keeping systems as common as possible reduces the complexity of flight attendant training and by so doing ensures more consistent service to customers.