

## Boeing faces deadline to address safety concerns

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Washington: Boeing told federal regulators Thursday (May 30) how it plans to fix the safety and quality problems that have plagued its aircraft-manufacturing work in recent years.

The Federal Aviation Administration required the company to produce a turnaround plan after one of its jetliners suffered a blowout of a fuselage panel during an Alaska Airlines flight in January. In late February, FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker gave Boeing 90 days to come up with a plan to improve quality and ease the agency's safety concerns.

"This is a guide for a new way for Boeing to do business," Whitaker said after he met with Boeing CEO David Calhoun and other senior company leaders Thursday. Boeing has laid out a road map, "now they need to execute."

Nobody was hurt during January's incident on a relatively new Boeing 737 Max 9 as the plane flew above Oregon. Accident investigators determined that bolts that helped secure the panel to the frame of the plane were missing before the piece blew off. The mishap has further battered Boeing's reputation and led to multiple civil and criminal investigations.

The FAA limited Boeing production of the 737 Max, its best-selling plane, after the close call involving the Alaska Airlines jetliner. Whitaker said the cap will remain in place until his agency is satisfied Boeing is making progress.

Boeing's recent problems could expose it to criminal prosecution related to the deadly crashes of two Max jetliners in 2018 and 2019. The Justice Department said two weeks ago that Boeing violated terms of a 2021 settlement that allowed it to avoid prosecution for fraud. The charge was based on the company allegedly deceiving regulators about

The FAA has put more inspectors inside Boeing and Spirit AeroSystems plants and created more inspection points since the Alaska Airlines blowout, according to Whitaker. He acknowledged it's not certain whether more inspectors would have prevented the blowout but said more eyes would have improved the chances of catching mistakes.

Whistleblowers have accused the company of taking shortcuts that endanger passengers, a claim that Boeing disputes. A panel convened by the FAA prior to the blowout found shortcomings in the aircraft maker's safety culture.

Most of the recent problems have been related to the Max, however Boeing and key supplier Spirit AeroSystems have also struggled with manufacturing flaws on a larger plane, the 787 Dreamliner. Boeing has suffered setbacks on other programs including its Starliner space capsule, a military refueling tanker, and new Air Force One presidential jets.

Boeing officials have vowed to regain the trust of regulators and the flying public. Boeing has fallen behind rival Airbus, and production setbacks have hurt the company's ability to generate cash.

The company says it is reducing "traveled work" — assembly tasks that are done out of their proper chronological order — and keeping closer

tabs on Spirit AeroSystems.

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