

FedEx begins MD-11 test flights after fatal UPS crash

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 12 May, 2026



Dhaka: FedEx has begun a series of test flights with its McDonnell Douglas MD-11 freighters as the delivery giant moves toward the aircraft's operational return following a fatal UPS crash in Louisville last year.

According to ADS-B data from a flight tracking platform, two FedEx MD-11Fs — N621FE and N521FE — have undertaken four test flights so far, with a partial fleet return expected by the end of May.

The first test flight saw N621FE depart Memphis International Airport on May 9, with the aircraft returning approximately an hour and 15 minutes later. A second flight on May 10 traveled from Memphis to Miami International Airport, lasting just under two hours.

Meanwhile, N521FE completed two flights on May 10 — one returning to Memphis after an hour while the other flew to Los Angeles

International Airport.

FedEx has been working with Boeing and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to facilitate the MD-11's return to service. Boeing has provided a design fix intended to clear all 29 of FedEx's MD-11s for operations, pending FAA approval.

The developments follow the crash of a UPS MD-11 on November 4, 2025, shortly after departing Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport en route to Honolulu. The accident killed three crew members and 12 people on the ground, prompting UPS to retire the type entirely.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) determined that the aircraft's left engine and its pylon separated from the wing moments after takeoff due to fatigue cracking in components at the engine-to-wing attachment point.

Investigators found the cracking had developed over time, with additional damage consistent with structural failure under load at the moment of final separation.

The NTSB will hold a two-day investigative hearing on May 19 and 20 as its investigation continues.

V