



By Lee Ann Tegtmeyer/Overhaul & Maintenance



People attending the Farnborough International Airshow can see what aircraft recycling is all about, thanks to a big demonstration project organized by the Aircraft Fleet Recycling Association (AFRA) and members Air Salvage International, P3 Aviation and WINGNet. Witness Air Salvage disassembling the fuselage--from removing the interiors, recycling the plastics and tagging the reusable parts. See the harvested parts at P3 Aviation's parts management display.

AFRA's 16-by-16-m display area will be located prominently just outside of the main pavilion at Farnborough. Swing by and learn more about environmentally sound life-cycle management practices.

Speaking of good business and environmental policies for aviation, AFRA's other big news is that its members finished best management practices for used aircraft parts and assemblies, as well as the associated accrediting process. This stringent protocol, which AFRA members finalized May 1920, is not easy to pass and "looks from soup to nuts at the whole disassembly process, which currently is not regulated," said Bill Carberry, deputy director of AFRA and Boeing's project manager, aircraft recycling.

The audit contains requirements for facility set up and security, employee training, asset records and documentation, tooling, parts management and recycling. Through the audit, companies "must show technicians and engineers working on a plane have access to current manuals for that model; that they know how to look things up and they've been trained on how to use them; they have the right tools; their facility is set up properly, which means there are proper environmental and safety controls; there is a proper parts flow so that if they're doing two to three planes, the parts don't get mixed," he explained. Basically, each step of the disassembly process has documented requirements.

Four companies went through the audit on a trial basis and others have scheduled audits, according to Carberry, so at this point, no company has completed all of the requirements, "but some are close." AFRA hired auditors associated with the Aviation Suppliers Association to complete the process on a third-party basis for competitive reasons, so "we're not kept in the loop during the audit and don't know about companies until they have passed."

What's the benefit of going through the strenuous accreditation? "It shows your processes are reproducible and well documented, you're using the right manuals, you're doing things the right way," which means "your parts have more value, and the parts are safer for return back into aviation service." That alone should help the audit's commercial acceptance in the industry, regardless of the environmental benefits. (Visit www.afraassociation.org to learn more about the audit application process.)

AFRA, which is celebrating its second anniversary as a non-profit group trying to improve the sustainability of commercial aviation in an environmentally responsible way, now has 33 members. One of its next efforts will expand the best practices manual to include handling engines and electronics

recycling, according to Carberry.

Another longer range target is trying to put together a plan where we can use AFRA-accredited companies to disassemble aircraft that have been abandoned" on the tarmac, he said. Although the precise number of abandoned aircraft in Africa, Central and South America, and Asia is not known, there could be hundreds--up to a thousand. AFRA is working on a funding proposal it plans to submit to the United Nations to "help alleviate the abandoned aircraft problem around the world and get that material back into manufacturing applications," said Carberry.

This project could take at least five years to launch because several major obstacles first must be overcome, including designating who has the authority to say these planes can be scrapped and who possesses legal ownership of them. Between 80% and 85% of an aircraft can be recycled typically, and AFRA hopes to establish at least that percentage as an industry standard. Right now, some companies are more aggressive in their recycling efforts, while some are less, so this range could be established as a baseline.

Carberry said Boeing has a project underway to employ technologies not typically used in aircraft scrapping that would boost the figure to 90% recyclability. He wouldn't reveal company names because "it's all in the contracts and negotiations stage, which goes at its own pace," but he said the companies typically are involved in home and auto recycling. Carberry hopes to implement the project by the end of the year.

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