



After Tragedy, Southwest Airlines Has Completed Its Inspections

Safety concerns following the recent Southwest Airlines tragedy, in which an engine broke apart, shattering a window, and ultimately causing the death of the passenger seated by the window, roused the FAA to order new engine inspections. The mandatory inspections affected the world's largest airlines.

What was the Focus of the Inspections?

This new directive specifically addressed the cause of the incident, the CFM56-7B engine fan blade, which broke due to a fatigue fracture. Fan blades that had been used in at least 20,000 flights were checked for damage or wear. Another order had already been given prior to the tragedy to inspect any fan blade models that had made at least 30,000 flights. The engine involved in the incident is commonly found on Boeing 737 NG airplanes.

The Entire Airline Industry Recognizes the Importance of Inspections

The ripple effect of the Southwest Airlines incident could be felt throughout the airline industry, causing other organizations to require similar inspections. The European Aviation Safety Agency, based in Germany, called for ultrasonic inspections of airplanes, using high frequency sound energy to detect internal flaws.

What Were the Results?

Southwest Airlines completed the inspection of 35,000 engine blades. No flaws were found. A "handful" of blades were sent to the manufacturer for further inspection as an overabundance of caution. Those blades had what seemed to be an anomaly in the coating. There are plans for periodic inspections going forward.