



AIRBUS PREPARES TO OPEN FIRST U.S. A320 FACTORY

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Airbus will hold inaugural ceremonies in Mobile, Alabama, Sep. 14 as top executives and U.S. dignitaries celebrate the opening of the company's first U.S. manufacturing facility.

Celebrations for the new A320-family assembly-and-delivery facility will begin Sunday, Sep. 13 when the company briefs invited media, which will be given a preview tour of the factory.

Formal opening ceremonies will take place through Monday morning, led by senior Airbus management including Airbus Group CEO Tom Enders, Airbus president and CEO Fabrice Brégier, Airbus Group Inc. chairman and CEO Allan McArtor and Airbus Americas president Barry Eccleston.

Airbus announced in July 2012 that it would establish its first U.S. factory in Mobile. The company

has invested US\$600 million to develop the facility, which is spread over 53 acres and follows a factory template similar to A320 final assembly line factories in Hamburg, Germany, and Tianjin, China. The company's main factory, test facility and headquarters is in Toulouse, France.

Aircraft assembly began at the Mobile factory in July this year and first deliveries are scheduled for 2016, ramping up to an annual rate of between 40 and 50 A219, A320 and A321 aircraft by 2018. The first delivery, an A321, is expected to go to JetBlue Airways.

The development is a major boost to the Gulf Coast region in the U.S. Deep South, which has suffered hurricane and oil spill catastrophes and economic depression.

Brégier has said the facility has already paid off for the European manufacturer, helping to boost sales in North America. Brégier said part of Airbus' long-term strategy was to invest in the U.S. and be closer to American customers. The company has secured recent major sales with American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, JetBlue and United Airlines.

The Mobile factory will also help with Airbus' planned A320 production rampup as it transitions to the re-engined neo version and aims to meet large backlogs. To date, the company has won 4,193 firm orders from 74 customers for A320neo family aircraft. Among U.S. customers for the neo are Air Lease Corp., American, Aviation Capital Group, Hawaiian Airlines, JetBlue, Spirit Airlines and Virgin America.

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