

A SPACE-FLEX SETBACK: CARRIER CHOOSES COMFORT FOR CREW

News / Airlines



Earlier this year RGN learned that a major carrier was evaluating the Airbus/Zodiac Space-Flex v2 lavatory/galley option and had less than stellar overall impressions of the product. The airline suggested that “no group other than finance was enthusiastic about it”. RGN has now confirmed that for this airline, “Zodiac space galley for the A320 has been killed, at least for the time being.”

While Zodiac and Airbus – partners on V2 – may be disappointed to lose out on the order for 100+ cabin retrofits, the move should keep passengers and inflight crew happy. And both parties are significant when it comes to such decisions.

Most of the objections previously disclosed to RGN about the Space-Flex v2 offering were related to catering and crew safety challenges. Interestingly, Delta Air Lines recently acknowledged that certain changes to its cabin configurations were bad for the crew and the carrier is reversing course. This was the first significant public nod to the importance of recognizing crew needs in cabin layout decisions, and a good reminder that such considerations are part of the process. Clearly other airlines are thinking similarly.

But the decision may also be tied to limiting capacity growth. Most larger airlines today are pursuing a path of limited capacity growth, particularly in the markets served by A320 family aircraft. JetBlue is, for instance, adding some seats to its A320s, likely through installation of the Space-Flex v2 arrangement together with newer, slimline seats. But even with this move JetBlue is keeping a generous seat pitch in economy (33?) and not adding the maximum number of seats to

its aircraft. Likewise, other airlines control capacity in this fashion.

In unrelated news, Zodiac is separately facing delays in delivering toilets to the Airbus A350 XWB program, Reuters reports. It's the latest challenge to afflict the company. Zodiac has grappled with supply chain constraints unique to the firm, including a strike last fall at its Gainesville, Texas plant formerly known as Weber, which led to the delay of thousands of aircraft seats. In September, American Airlines announced it is sourcing a new vendor to supply Business Class seats for its Boeing 787-9 aircraft and the remainder of its Boeing 777-200 retrofit aircraft, as a result of the chronic delays at Zodiac.

In releasing its fiscal first quarter earnings results this week, Zodiac assured it is continuing to implement its transformation plan, called Focus, "which will help improve operational and financial performance". This plan, added Zodiac, "is designed to enable the Group to draw lessons from the crisis that affected the Group's Aircraft Interiors activities in 2014/2015."

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