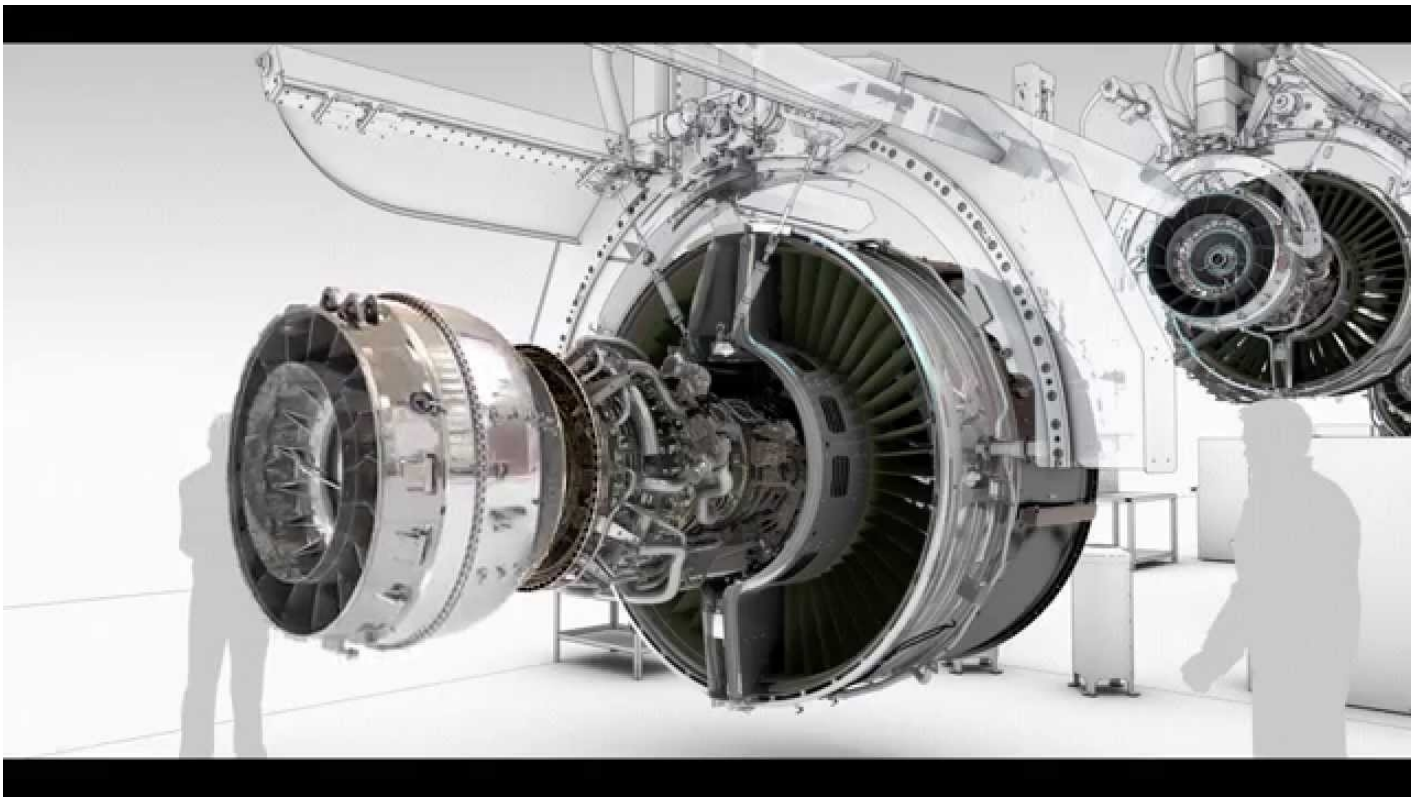
THE LEAP 500: ENGINE RAMP UP IS OFF TO FAST START AT GE LAFAYETTE

News / Manufacturer



State-of-the-art facility in Indiana built to handle record production

Just 60 miles from the iconic Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the GE Aviation Lafayette team is focused on its own 500.

This year, GE's facilities in Lafayette, Ind., and Durham, N.C., are teaming to produce about 500 jet-engine "hot sections" for the world's fast-selling airline jet engine – the CFM International LEAP engine. The "hot section" module combines the compressor, combustor, high-pressure turbine areas to give the engine its power.

Half of these 500 "hot sections" will be used to assemble 250 full LEAP engines at Lafayette and Durham in 2017; the other 250 "hot sections" will be shipped to Safran Aircraft Engines facilities in Villaroche, France, for final engine assembly. CFM is a 50/50 joint company between GE and Safran Aircraft Engines, and final engine assembly occurs at both GE and Safran.

Between GE and Safran, 500 LEAP engines are expected to be assembled this year – that's more than four times the number of LEAP engines assembled in 2016.

This tremendous ramp up is designed to meet customer demand for LEAP, which in its short

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existence is already the world’s best-selling jet engine with more than 12,200 orders.

“The 500” will take a combination of precision, technology and teamwork to execute, so GE has finely-tuned its Lafayette facility to meet the demand.

The $50 million, 300,000-square foot, state-of the-art facility is loaded with new technologies, including automated vision inspection systems and radio frequency parts management to easily spot parts on the shop floor. The facility’s main structure has a 2,500-ton steel frame with a 370-lb column design to support its overhead gantry cranes. This allows minimal movement for the precision engine work taking place.

With GE’s added investment of machinery and equipment to perform maintenance, repair and overhaul capabilities, the company has invested more than $110 million here. It’s part of more than $4.3 billion that GE has spent on its growing US operations since 2011.

“The Lafayette Assembly and MRO Facility is among our most advanced sites” plant leader Eric Matteson said. “Its proximity to our primary warehouse near Cincinnati and the central location between large airports in Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C. and Atlanta also makes it very valuable to the business.”

Lafayette’s workforce numbers are also ramping up. The facility opened in September of 2015 with a team of 21 employees. The number has swelled to 72 as of March and could grow to more than 230 when the LEAP program reaches peak production.

GE coordinated with two Indiana universities – Ivy Tech at Lafayette and Purdue University – on a co-enrollment program that trains students to fill the emerging talent needs at the facility.

“The community has proven to be an invaluable partner and I know we’ll continue to be successful as we take on this additional work at the Lafayette site,” Matteson said. “Our area colleges are training the "right" talent for the plant. This will give our operation a competitive advantage as we move forward.”

29 MARCH 2017

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