



# American News

## FBI Intensifies Boeing Panel Blowout Probe

Passengers aboard an Alaska Airlines plane that made an emergency landing after a Boeing fuselage panel blew off this year have started to receive letters from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation identifying them as possible victims of a crime, Reuters reports. The move indicates that the Justice Department's criminal investigation into Boeing is ramping up.

"As a victim specialist with the Seattle division, I'm contacting you because we have identified you as a possible victim of a crime," reads the letter from the FBI's Seattle office. The letter says the incident is under criminal FBI investigation but adds that such inquiries can be lengthy and that "for several reasons, we cannot tell you about its progress at this time."

The catastrophic failure occurred January 5, 2024 when a door plug blew off a new Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 Max 9 at 16,000 feet, imperiling 171 passengers and 6 crew members. The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the door plug was missing four bolts meant to secure it in place. However, a month after the NTSB determined that the bolts were missing, the agency is no closer to questioning any of the 25 door crew employees involved.

"To date, we still do not know who performed the work to open, reinstall, and close the door plug on the accident aircraft," NTSB chair Jennifer Homendy stated. "Boeing has informed us that they are unable to find the records documenting this work. A verbal request was made by our investigators for security camera footage to help obtain this information; however, they were informed the footage was overwritten."

## Boeing: Supply Chain Issues Through 2024



Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun said it could take until the end of 2024 to iron out sector-wide supply chain problems that have hampered global jetliner production. "Priority one for the two airplane manufacturers is stability," Calhoun told the Qatar Economic Forum, referring to Boeing and its main European rival Airbus. "We have to resolve the supply chain issues and the surprise associated with it; and we have to resolve it sort of once and for all," Calhoun told the event in Doha. "That is not a short-term job.

It sounds like it might be, but I think it could take all of this year and probably all of next year."

In April Calhoun had reported progress in tackling the supply chain and repeated November guidance that "significant supply chain improvement" was unlikely "until well into 2024". Calhoun's latest projection on the speed of recovery in the supply chain echoes comments by Airbus Chief Executive Guillaume Faury, who told France Inter last month that production would regain pre-pandemic levels at the end of 2024 or even in 2025. Despite the overall pattern of disruption, Calhoun said that he did not think recent manufacturing problems with the best-selling 737 narrow-body jet would defer those production schedules for more than "maybe a month or a month and a half."

On future developments, Calhoun said the industry was unlikely to introduce all-new jet designs before the mid-2030s. "I think in our industry, because of some of the constraints both in propulsion and the design of the wing, it's going to be at least until the mid-2030s before we - in this case I'm just going to assume my competitor - will call out that airplane."

## Fastener Index Gains From Stable Demand

The seasonally adjusted Fastener Distributor Index bounced back to growth in February 2024 with a reading of 50.5 amid stabilizing demand. Following solid month-over-month improvement in January, the FDI saw further modest sequential improvement in February.

However, when looking at the underlying drivers, the FDI paints a slightly more mixed picture as three of the four components (sales, employment and customer inventories) were stable to lower from the previous month. Only the supplier deliveries index improved, which drove the overall m/m improvement in the headline FDI.

Looking at the sales index 31% of respondents indicated sales came in above seasonal expectations which was down vs. 44% in January but essentially matched the 30% average over the past year.

## Fastenal Sales Decline Slows

**FASTENAL**® Fastenal Co. reported fastener sales improved in February 2024, falling 3.5% to US\$198.2 million (31.6% of overall sales) compared to a 6% decline in January. A year earlier, February fastener sales increased 8%.



Total February sales gained 7.7% to US\$627.1 million. Daily sales improved 2.6% to US\$29.9 million. Sales in the U.S. grew 2.4% to US\$524.9 million, while sales in Canada and Mexico increased 4.8% to US\$83.4 million. Sales to heavy manufacturing customers rose 3.1%, with sales to non-residential construction customers falling 3.4% during February.

Fastenal's full time workforce increased 3.9% during the month to 20,999 employees. Distribution / transportation personnel grew 6.6% to 3,226, while manufacturing personnel declined 0.3% to 704 workers.



## New IFI Board Leadership & Division Officers and 2024 Award Recipients

The Industrial Fasteners Institute (IFI), Independence, OH, USA, elected new leaders for the IFI's Board of Directors for the 2024-2025 term at its recent annual meeting. Dan Curtis of MacLean-Fogg Company was selected to lead the Board as Chairman, along with Larry Spelman of J.H. Botts LLC as Vice Chairman, and with Gene Simpson of Semblex Corp. as Ex-Officio Chair.



**Dan Curtis - Chairman**  
MacLean-Fogg Company



**Larry Spelman – Vice Chair**  
J.H. Botts, LLC

### IFI Board Representatives and Division Chairs have also been elected:

- DIVISION I: Industrial Products Officers – Chairman, Attsie Hashimoto of Unytite; Vice Chairman, Sebastian Janas of Sems and Specials.
- DIVISION I: Board Representatives – Attsie Hashimoto of Unytite; Brian Prodoehl of Valley Fastener Group; Steve Sherman of Industrial Rivet & Nut.
- DIVISION II: Aerospace Products Officers – Chairman, Doug Carlton of Click-Bond; Vice-Chair, Mehrzad Bahri of Novaria Group; Member-At-Large, Marty Goeree of Vegas Fastener Manufacturing; Tech. Chairman, Mike Mowins of IFI; ALMA Technical Chair, David Roberto.
- DIVISION II: Board Members – Devin Wilson of Parker Fasteners; Robert Gurrola of Howmet Fastening Systems; Jim Erbs of Safety Socket LLC.
- DIVISION III: Automotive Products Officers – Chairman, John Medcalf of Agrati; Vice Chair, Genevieve Gurnick-Long of Seaway Bolt & Specials.
- DIVISION III Board Representatives – Kevin Vollmert of ITW Shakeproof Automotive; Greg Rawlings of Nylok; Steve Dixon of Camcar Innovations.
- Associate Suppliers Division (ASD) Board Officers – Chairman, Herb Gottelt of Metal Resource Solutions; Vice-Chair, Nilo Urbani of Precote USA, LLC.

### IFI's 2024 Award Recipients:



**John O'Brien**



**Ken Gomes**



**Viral Varshney**



- **2024 IFI Soaring Eagle Service Award Recipient:** John O'Brien who has served the IFI for over 20 years; serving as an Officer, Chair of the Institute and fastener industry advocate.
- **2024 IFI Soaring Eagle Technology Award Recipient:** Ken Gomes of REMINC, who has been a long contributing member to the IFI as well as to fastener technology.
- **2024 IFI Joe Greenslade Young Leadership Award Recipient:** Viral Varshney of REMINC, who in his first ten years of working in the fastener industry, has already made a significant impression with his work concerning clinch fasteners.

The IFI is a trade association representing manufacturers of mechanical fasteners and formed parts made in North America. IFI is an engineering-oriented organization addressing the operational concerns of its members. It is involved in the setting of industry manufacturing standards with SAE, ASTM, ISO and others as well as developing its own standards in response to member issues.

### PennEngineering® Partners with Endries International

## PennEngineering®

PennEngineering®, Danboro, PA, USA, has announced a new North American distributor partnership with Wisconsin-based Endries International, Inc., a leading distributor of fasteners and Class-C parts that serves industrial OEMs and the industrial marketplace worldwide. With 11 USA and international distribution centers, Endries provides over 500,000 SKUs to their global customer base. Joining forces with Endries allows PennEngineering to support North American market demand.

### Birmingham Fasteners Expands Footprint with Facility in Mexico

## BIRMINGHAM FASTENER

Birmingham Fastener, a full-service manufacturer and distributor of high-quality specialty fasteners, is expanding to Mexico with the opening of a facility in Querétaro City. The new facility will help businesses that have commercial, construction or aerospace projects in Mexico localize their supply chain and access inventory quicker. Commercial and Aerospace Supply de Mexico S. de R.L de C.V. (CASM) will operate as a wholly owned subsidiary of Birmingham

Fastener, with support including inventory supply from Alabama Aerospace, Birmingham Fastener's aerospace and defense branch. CASM will supply both commercial and aerospace parts to the manufacturing, construction and maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) sectors in Mexico. "We are excited about Mexico being our first location outside of the USA," says Brad Tinney, Birmingham Fastener President/CEO. "The business and growth environment in Mexico makes it the perfect place to locate." Saúl Pedraza will lead the CASM team in Querétaro.

### Crescent Adding Heading Machines



CRESCENT MANUFACTURING



Crescent Manufacturing, Burlington, CT, USA, reports, "Excitement is palpable here at Crescent right now as the integration process of our new state-of-the-art heading machines is well underway. As we complete the process of adding the heading machines to our shop floor, we anticipate a significant transformation that will enhance our production capacity and output. These new machines mark a notable milestone in Crescent Manufacturing's journey, representing a substantial investment in our future production capabilities. "Our entire team is eagerly looking forward to witnessing these new headers in action. Not only are they faster than our current machines, but they're Crescent's first investment in new production equipment in many years!" ■

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