AvEx LOUISIANA COATS AIRPLANES ARTISTICALLY

Paint up and fly right

Patrick Courreges
Staff Writer

NEW IBERIA — Build a bigger hangar and painters will beat a runway to the door.

Construction on a new 747 paint hangar at Acadiana Regional Airport should be completed by the middle of next spring, AvEx Louisiana President Paul Lubomirski expects big opportunities to roll in with the big planes.

“We have found that expansion of facilities has always opened new doors in the industry,” he said. “The ‘47 hangar is another step and it opens another door for us.”

AvEx’s business is painting airplanes, and its specialty is complex graphics, which it works on in partnership with the Lafayette-based Solo Graphics company, he said.

“Painting is a very high-visibility item that is directly related to marketing,” Lubomirski said. “It’s probably the last thing that gets done, but it’s the most noticeable.”

Larger companies prefer corporate images. Newer, smaller airlines and carriers, however, often look for creative paint work to draw attention, such as painting a Chicago skyline on the fuselage, Lubomirski said.

“We like the steady customers, but we also like the variety some of the fancy paint jobs give us,” he said.

A well-painted airplane gives passengers the confidence the equipment is well maintained, he said.

“That’s our market niche,” Lubomirski said. “There’s not a lot of places that do just paint.”

Nor do many places have the capability of taking on the big 747s, he said. AvEx Louisiana has the market to itself in-state.

“This is going to be unique,” Lubomirski said. “This will be among the best paint hangars in the country, surpassed only by the manufacturer’s hangars and one airline.”

AvEx Louisiana, short for Aviation Exteriors, started out at ARA in 1990 as Pride Aviation. It has sister facilities in Portland, Ore., and Greenville, Miss.

The company paints planes for several domestic companies, including FedEx, UPS, Boeing, Piedmont and Southwest. It has broken into the international market with China Southern, New Zealand, Singapore and Thai Airways, Lubomirski said.

The ability to do paint work for companies using 747s could parlay into more business with smaller planes on domestic and international air fleets, he said.

“A lot of these airlines and air carriers, they generally try to use one vendor,” Lubomirski said. “It’s important to have the capacity to handle everything they’ve got.”

The new hangar may also help attract military work, he said.

“The facility definitely attracts that kind of business,” Lubomirski said. “We’re already marketing it, but no one will commit until it’s up and running.”

AvEx workers will be able to churn out a freshly-painted plane every 10 to 14 days, he said.

“At full peak, we’ll probably be doing two to two and a half planes a month,” Lubomirski said.

“A lot of these airlines and air carriers, they generally try to use one vendor,” Lubomirski said. “It’s important to have the capacity to handle everything they’ve got.”

AvEx workers will be able to churn out a freshly-painted plane every 10 to 14 days, he said.

“The facility definitely attracts that kind of business,” Lubomirski said. “We’re already marketing it, but no one will commit until it’s up and running.”

AvEx workers will be able to churn out a freshly-painted plane every 10 to 14 days, he said.

“At full peak, we’ll probably be doing two to two and a half planes a month,” Lubomirski said.

A Boeing 737-200, which belongs to Phil Air, sits at Acadiana Regional Airport on Friday. AvEx Louisiana awaits the completion of a new 747 paint hangar. AvEx Louisiana President Paul Lubomirski expects big opportunities to roll in with the big planes. AvEx’s business is painting airplanes, and its specialty is complex graphics.

“The facility definitely attracts that kind of business,” Lubomirski said. “We’re already marketing it, but no one will commit until it’s up and running.”

AvEx workers will be able to churn out a freshly-painted plane every 10 to 14 days, he said.

“At full peak, we’ll probably be doing two to two and a half planes a month,” Lubomirski said.

“Painting is a very high-visibility item that is directly related to marketing. It’s probably the last thing that gets done, but it’s the most noticeable.”

Paul Lubomirski
AvEx Louisiana president

AvEx Louisiana usually employs about 110 people, but the employee list can jump up to around 160 in the busy months before the winter and summer holiday seasons, Lubomirski said.

Most new workers will come from Iberia Parish and nearby parishes, he said.

“We don’t bring people from outside to work here. We don’t find that’s effective,” Lubomirski said.

AvEx Louisiana also tries to keep its business local, buying from suppliers in the area, he said.

“There will definitely be an impact on local business,” Lubomirski said. “All of these businesses, the volume will go up.”

The volume of business for the company has gone up in recent years, even before ground was broken on the 747 hangar, he said.

“The whole aviation industry is just booming and that’s good for us, because there’s a lot of growth,” Lubomirski said.