

Midwest Airlines laying off 59 flight crew members

By Tom Daykin of the Journal Sentinel

Posted: Sept. 2, 2009

Midwest Airlines Inc. is laying off 59 more flight crew members as the Oak Creek-based carrier continues to replace Boeing 717 jets with jets operated by Midwest's new owner, Republic Airways Holdings Inc.

The latest layoff will take effect beginning Oct. 31, according to a notice filed with the state Department of Workforce Development. By December, all Midwest Boeing jets will be replaced by Republic-staffed jets, mainly Embraer 190s, Jim Reichart, Midwest's director of brand and advertising, said Wednesday.

The Embraer aircraft are staffed by pilots and flight attendants represented separately by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Those two Teamsters locals are negotiating with the Midwest unions - the Air Line Pilots Association and the Association of Flight Attendants - over combining employee seniority lists from both Midwest and Republic.

Once those lists are combined, the former Midwest Boeing flight crews could be hired back on Embraer jets, Reichart said.

Officials from the Air Line Pilots Association and the Association of Flight Attendants say their members would be paid substantially less under Republic's labor agreements with the Teamsters. The Midwest pilots and flight attendants who are being laid off have much more seniority than their Republic counterparts.

The integration talks between the AFA and the Teamsters have moved slowly, a source of frustration to Midwest flight attendants who are losing their jobs, said Toni Higgins, president of the AFA unit at Midwest. The two unions are asking an arbitrator to rule on combining the list of 410 flight attendants represented by the AFA, including about 300 who have been laid off since the summer of 2008, with around 1,600 Teamsters flight attendants.

Barry Schimmel, business agent for Teamsters Local 135, said the process is being delayed because Republic, which completed its \$31 million purchase of Midwest on July 31, is also buying Denver-based Frontier Airlines.

The Frontier purchase is to be completed by Oct. 1 and will require the combination of that airline's 1,000 or so non-union flight attendants, Schimmel said. He said it makes sense to wait until Republic owns Frontier, and then combine all three lists in one process.

ALPA officials are still negotiating with the Teamsters but are disappointed about Republic's plans to lay off all remaining Midwest Airlines union flight crews, Midwest ALPA spokesman Bryan Jandorf said.

Midwest Airlines in August cut about 100 jobs from its Milwaukee-area workforce, a reduction of about 9%. Most of those [job cuts](#) from Midwest's Oak Creek headquarters and operations at Milwaukee's Mitchell International Airport were back-office and administrative positions that duplicate jobs at Indianapolis-based Republic.