



FedEx launches nonstop flights from China to Indy

Chris O'Malley November 16, 2010

Indianapolis International Airport has landed its first nonstop cargo flights from China, a move that could lure to the region businesses that want ready access to the Asian economic dynamo.

The nearly daily FedEx flight from Hong Kong to Indianapolis has been underway since at least last month—made possible by new Boeing 777 freighters being placed into its fleet.

For decades, Indianapolis airport and economic development officials have clamored for nonstop cargo links with Asia. FedEx flights between Indianapolis and Asia typically stop in Anchorage, Alaska, instead.

“This is huge,” said David Holt, business development director for logistics initiative Conexus Indiana.

“It helps show we have the ability to do that direct flight, with no stops ... I think it will help attract the types of businesses that use this kind of service.”

Memphis-based FedEx has not yet announced the non-stop flights from Hong Kong. The company is gradually ramping up its Boeing 777 operations in Indianapolis, explained FedEx spokesman Jim McCluskey.

Nor has the Indianapolis Airport Authority heralded the new service, other than to allude to it at last month’s board meeting—a milestone lost on some who attended the meeting.

Airport officials said they expect to collect \$300,000 to \$350,000 annually from a FedEx Hong Kong flight. The money comes from landing and apron fees.

FedEx alone amounts to 48 percent of all landed weight at the airport, generating \$9.2 million for the airport last year in landing fees, compared to \$8.9 million paid by scheduled passenger airlines.

FedEx is flying at least one flight from Hong Kong to Indianapolis—flight 158, on nearly a daily basis. The most recent was a Boeing 777 that arrived Monday at 11:23 p.m. after making a 7,965-mile, 13-hour, 18-minute flight from Hong Kong, according to FlightAware.com

FlightAware data show FedEx has been flying to Indianapolis nonstop from Hong Kong since at least Oct. 18. It's unclear whether any flights are departing from Indianapolis to Hong Kong.

FedEx employs about 5,000 people at its Indianapolis hub, its second-largest in the United States, with more than 650 flights per month. About 600,000 packages pass through the Indianapolis facility daily.

The cargo carrier now has 11 new 777s, which have an extended range and relatively lower operating costs. The company has another 40 of the aircraft on order, with options to buy 15 more.

“We’ll be doing more of this (international nonstops) as we get more 777s into the fleet,” said McCluskey said.

He said he could not elaborate on how many more 777s were bound for Indianapolis or how many additional nonstop international flights could be on the way.

Nearly four years ago, FedEx embarked on a massive expansion of its Indianapolis hub. FedEx has made Indianapolis one of the top 10-busiest air cargo facilities in the nation and in the top 25 worldwide.

FedEx is not the only cargo carrier with nonstop international flights. Cargolux flies Boeing 747 freighters carrying pharmaceuticals between Indianapolis and Luxembourg.