
Air NZ and Zenith Tecnica partner to explore 3D printing

By **Rachel Debling** on August, 9 2018 | Cabin Maintenance



Using 3D printers to create metal aircraft parts may be in the future for [Air New Zealand](#). The airline announced today that they are partnering with New Zealand-owned [Zenith Tecnica](#) to examine how the technology can be used in the aircraft industry.

Zenith Tecnica, a 3D printing specialist, uses electron beam melting (EBM) to design and manufacture products made from titanium and other metals. ([Arcam EBM](#), a [GE Additive](#) company, produces the EBM machines used by Zenith.)

According to the airline, prototypes for metal cabin framing have already been tested, along with a unique piece of serveware that allowed its designers to stretch their creative muscles.

As Air New Zealand Chief Operations Officer Bruce Parton explained: "It's fantastic to be able to team up with and support local operator Zenith Tecnica and work with global company GE Additive to learn and collaborate in this space. While we are in the initial stages of working with these companies on 3D printing, so far, we have printed prototype metal framing for our Business Premier cabin, to quickly test new concepts and ideas, and we have also made novelty wine aerators.

"While the aerators, made to look like replica aircraft engines, are a bit of fun we're really excited by the possibility they represent as 3D printing is both cost and space effective. Aircraft interiors are made up of tens of thousands of parts, and the ability to 3D print ... lightweight parts we only require a small number of [on demand], rather than rely on traditional manufacturing methods is of huge benefit to our business, without compromising safety, strength or durability."

"This is a good project to demonstrate the strength, versatility and utility of titanium 3D printed parts for aircraft applications and it's very exciting to be working alongside Air New Zealand on this journey," added Zenith Tecnica Managing Director Martyn Newby. "We are in a very good position to support the local adoption of 3D printing for aviation applications and welcome Air New Zealand's enthusiasm to embrace this emerging technology and help take it to the mainstream."

This isn't the first time that Air New Zealand has tinkered with 3D printing concepts, having tested the waters back in 2016. As part of its projects in this vein, the airline has partnered with [ST Engineering Aerospace](#), as well as Auckland University, Victoria University of Wellington and other tech companies.