

Old Aircraft? 90% Can Be Recycled

Cathay Pacific Airways, who have always considered themselves to be the airline most committed to green technology, sustainability and protecting the environment, recently unveiled their largest recycling project ever.



In November, Cathay Pacific announced that they will begin to dismantle and recycle the Airbus A340's that are going to be retired from their fleet. Given their focus on responsibility and sustainability, it only seems logical that their priorities would include effectively managing resources, reducing the energy consumption, and minimizing the amount of waste they leave behind.

Cathay Pacific's first Airbus A340 arrived in the year 1996, and has since operated a jaw-dropping 13,000 flights – including several regional and long-haul routes. Today, the well-traveled, four-engine aircraft are being gradually retired from Cathay Pacific's fleet. The airline, working in concert with AerFin Ltd (a United Kingdom-based company which works out of a facility located in southwestern France), has discovered a more environmentally friendly solution for the question of what to do with the retired aircraft.



Four of these aircraft left their ranks in the year 2015, and were quickly transferred to a facility where the recycling process could begin. Firstly, the aircraft is decommissioned, and both its fuel and water tanks are fully emptied. In the second step, the company dismantles the rest of the plane – equipment and parts like landing gear and engines – and tags these pieces before reusing them in other aircraft. Phase three is the removal and separation of the pieces that cannot be recycled. The fuselage, which can't be reused, will be broken down into pieces that can be sent to various recyclers.

Aluminum accounts for roughly 40% of the plane's weight, so it is melted down for reuse in construction, where it can be used to make doors or window frames. Aluminum may also find new life in car

manufacturing.

According to Cathay Pacific's director of corporate affairs, James Tong, the airline takes environmental protection very seriously, which has led to their determination to identify and adopt the most responsible, environmentally friendly approach to dismantling and recycling retired aircraft.



Thus far, says James Tong, they are pleased with the results of their efforts – up to 90% of the A340s' weight is recycled, and less than 10% of the planes' weight ends up as waste rotting in landfills. They are retiring old aircraft as part of their endeavor to replace older technology with brand new, more fuel-efficient planes. As such, all of the remaining A340s will disappear before the end of 2017.

Cathay Pacific uses 147 different types of plane. The airline plans to remain on the cutting edge, using new technological advances to allow them to operate in a continually more sustainable manner.

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