



How Xi'an's Strict Lockdown Is Affecting C919 Certification

by **Joanna Bailey** · January 5, 2022 · 🔊 10 shares · ⌚ 3 minute read

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COMAC's C919 should have been certified before the end of 2021. But, as has become common with the program, things have been delayed. Now, a strict lockdown in Xi'an threatens to add more push back to the certification process.



China's lockdown policies could further delay the C919 certification. Photo: Getty Images

C919 certification delayed

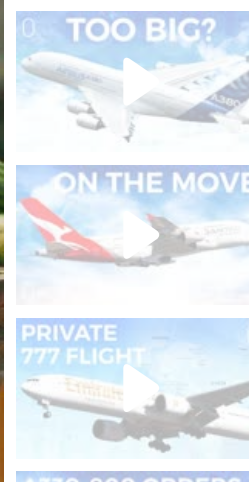
The long-awaited COMAC narrowbody challenger, the C919, was anticipated to be certified by the end of 2021. But here we are in 2022, and the type is yet to receive certification. This is despite flying since May 2017 and a fleet of [no less than six test aircraft](#) currently on the go.

In late December, the Chinese regulators confirmed that certification would be postponed until 2022. Certification flights are progressing rather slowly, with only 34 flights undertaken out of a minimum of 276, according to [Air Data News](#). But now, the C919 faces another hurdle in its certification journey.

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China's zero-COVID policy has seen some of the strictest lockdowns implemented to curb the spread of the virus. Following an outbreak of COVID cases on December 22nd, the city of Xi'an was sent into a hard lockdown overnight. Now into its 13th day, the lockdown appears to be beginning to work, with case rates dropping day by day. Residents are eager to be released from their restrictions, but it's not only the people that are being affected.

Certification has been pushed into 2022. Photo: Getty Images

Test aircraft in lockdown

As uncovered by Richard Schuurman at [Air Insight](#), it is not only the residents of Xi'an who are locked down right now. No fewer than four of the six C919 test aircraft were in Xi'an at the point of lockdown and haven't flown since. That's not surprising, given that people in the city aren't even allowed out for groceries right now.

Schuurman's report suggests that B-001A, B-001C, B-001D and B-001E were all in Xi'an on December 22nd. Aircraft 001E and 001D have flown since lockdown, with flights on the 25th and 24th December, respectively. However, China has since tightened the restrictions in the city, and now it is impossible for COMAC to get the aircraft moving again.

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Four of the six aircraft are stranded in Xi'an. Photo: Getty Images

Although test flights are continuing elsewhere, with the other two C919s at the test field in Dongying, crew in Xi'an are unable to leave the city. It's not even clear if they are allowed to travel from their place of residence to the airfield at Xi'an's Yanliang test base. One thing that is clear is that, until restrictions are lifted, the test program for the C919 will continue to stall.

Still some way to go

With what looks to be a sizeable amount of testing still to be undertaken and four of the aircraft stranded for the foreseeable, COMAC faces an uphill battle to get its narrowbody signed off. While it had hoped to [deliver the first operational aircraft](#) to launch customer China Eastern (for OTT Airlines) before the end of 2021, it now looks like even the end of 2022 could be something of a challenge.

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The C919's future is still uncertain, as many of the 971 orders reported to be placed for the type remain letters of intent or memorandums of understanding. China Eastern was the [first to turn its intent into a firm order](#) for the aircraft. But, aside from an order for 20 aircraft from GECAS, no airline or lessor outside of China has expressed an interest in the type.

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Managing Editor - Joanna has worked in publishing for more than a decade and is fast becoming a go-to source for commercial aviation analysis. Providing commentary for outlets including the BBC, CNBC, Reuters Thomson and others, she works closely with IATA, AviaDev and various airlines and suppliers to get the inside track on the global marketplace.

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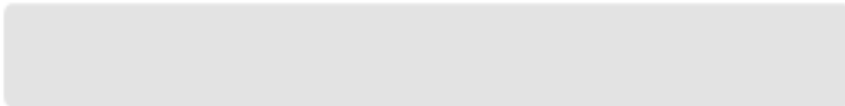
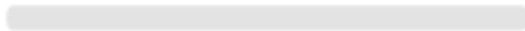
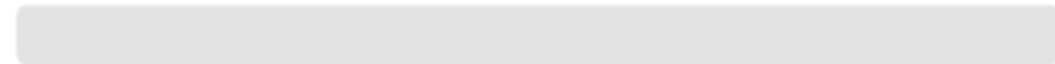
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