

JET-COMPLETION CENTER OK'D
600 jobs in 5 years

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Lindsay A. Miller / Arizona Daily Star
Avionics electrical technician **Robert Smith, left**, and interior technician Miguel Lopez build a mock-up of a jet at DunnAir Business Jet Completion Center. The business now can absorb many of the 800 people laid off from Bombardier Aerospace.

By Thomas Stauffer
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Dale Dunn hung a piece of history in his office Wednesday that will allow his company to absorb hundreds of laid-off aircraft workers.

The repair station certificate from the Federal Aviation Administration that Dunn received Wednesday gives the green light for his DunnAir Business Jet Completion Center to get to work.

The 600 jobs Dunn envisions creating over five years will re-employ many of the 800 people who lost their jobs when Bombardier Aerospace moved its Tucson aircraft-completion center to Wichita, Kan., and Montreal last year, said Tim Kanavel, DunnAir's director of business operations.

"We get eight to 10 calls a day from former Bombardier employees inquiring about jobs, and we've got about 1,100 résumés and applications on file," Kanavel said. "We're thrilled to have the certificate and now be in a position to start hiring these people."

The company, at 1555 E. Aero Park Blvd. near Tucson International Airport, currently has 35 employees and immediate openings for 10 more, Kanavel said. Within a year, DunnAir expects to have about 150 employees who will be paid an average salary of \$45,000, said Dunn, president and CEO of the company.

Dunn cited Bombardier's factory-trained work force, its developed facilities and the 33 acres DunnAir is currently leasing from the company as major factors in choosing Tucson. Dunn moved to Tucson from Dallas in 1990 under contract from Bombardier to develop a completion plant.

Add to that the favorable weather conditions in Tucson, which are "very kind to the metal of aircraft," and the aviation technology program at Pima Community College, which had been the main feeder for Bombardier, Dunn said.

"When Bombardier closed, a lot of our former students were left out in the cold," said Pete Stogsdill, the aviation technology department's chairman. "With Dunn here, future graduates can be funneled right into the same good jobs, so this is really great news."

Tucson Mayor Bob Walkup said the FAA certificate for DunnAir marks the end of a "long, hard battle" to secure high-quality jobs for Tucson.

"I'm extraordinarily pleased with this," Walkup said. "With Evergreen (Air Center in Marana) hiring as well,

**Timeline of Bombardier and
DunnAir in Tucson**

1990: Montreal-based Bombardier buys Learjet, which has only 200 Tucson employees.

2001: Local Bombardier operations peak with 2,250 employees, who finish approximately 200 aircraft.

2002: A sharp decrease in demand for business jets hits Bombardier hard. In January, the local plant announces plans to lay off 550 employees during the year.

2003: Bombardier announces it will cut about 800 Tucson jobs by moving aircraft completions to Wichita and near Montreal.

2004: The Tucson Airport Authority and DunnAir Business Jet Completion Center, a startup company, haggle for months before coming to a lease deal in December.

2005: DunnAir receives a repair station certificate from the FAA, allowing the company to begin hiring laid-off Bombardier workers.

we are literally out of aircraft mechanics in this city. It's just a great opportunity for people who want to get the training to enter a field that pays well and has great benefits."

DunnAir will be the largest aircraft completion center in the United States in physical size, with 250,000 square feet of hangar space, Dunn said.

"You could hold a stock-car race in this hangar," said Kanavel. "It's a pretty unbelievable sight." The company's original emphasis will be installing interiors on new aircraft and refurbishing old ones, but will add aircraft maintenance, exterior painting and avionics capacity, he said.

Bombardier, which officially shut down its completion center earlier this year, maintains a regional jet-service center and customer-service center in Tucson, Stogsdill said.