Bell Completes SPINE Upgrades on First Two H-1 Aircraft



The first AH-1Z and UH-1Y to be completed under the Structural and Power Improvements for NextGen Effects (SPINE) program, formerly SIEPU, have left the Amarillo Assembly Center
From Bell Textron

AMARILLO, Texas. (March, 17 2026) – Bell Textron Inc., a Textron Inc. (NYSE: TXT) company, has announced the completion of the first AH-1Z and UH-1Y aircraft to receive full upgrades to their structure and power delivery mechanisms under the US Marine Corps' SPINE program. The program was recently renamed from Structural Improvement and Electrical Power Upgrade (SIEPU) to the Structural and Power Improvements for NextGen Effects (SPINE) program to emphasize the importance of this essential modernization effort and to highlight the increased survivability and lethality SPINE will enable throughout the lifetime of the H-1 fleet.

The completed aircraft departed the Amarillo Assembly Center and are now at Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River for continued flight testing. These tests will determine the final SPINE configuration to be modified in Amarillo and fielded to the USMC in future contracted efforts.

The SPINE program will enable the H-1 fleet to utilize enhanced weapons systems and other future capabilities and is part of the H-1 program's modernization plan to increase lethality and enhance survivability by improving modern warfighting capabilities.

"To have these first two aircraft completed under the SPINE program is a huge moment for us," said Scott Sims, H-1 program director, Bell. "At Bell, crew safety and aircraft effectiveness remain the number one priority on everything we do. These upgrades will ensure that our H-1 aircraft remain the most capable aircraft available, while operating at the forefront of modern missions. They will continue to excel at the job they were designed to do for many years to come."

Bell's effort to modify these first two aircraft began at the company's Drives System Center (DSC) and Repair and Overhaul Center (ROC) and culminated in the aircraft electrical and structural modifications that took place over the last 19 months at the Amarillo Assembly Center. Successful execution has been a result of years of work between U.S. Government, Bell, and industry partners. The completion of the first modification effort at the Amarillo Assembly Center sets the stage for future growth as Bell looks to support modification of the Marine H-1 fleet over the next decade.

"In the competitive world that the H-1 lives and thrives in, it's vital to remain competitive with current and future capabilities and to excel in every environment where these

aircraft are deployed," said Danielle Markham, program manager, Bell.

"The SPINE program represents the next step in the H-1 evolution, ensuring the platform has structural strength, electrical capacity, and digital foundation needed to operate as a fully interoperable member of the modern joint force."