

Higher office

For crane operators in the 737 factory, teamwork keeps the production line moving

By Dawsalee Griffin



Anthony "Tony" Ullakko, an overhead crane operator at the Renton, Wash., factory, moves large segments of Next-Generation 737 wings between assembly positions. In this *Frontiers* series that profiles employees talking about their jobs, Ullakko explains how crane operators help keep 737s rolling out the factory door—at more than one a day. PHOTO: JIM ANDERSON/BOEING

We're the ones who connect the dots with the parts.

Every crane move is to make sure that large 737 parts get where they are needed so the mechanics can do their jobs in a timely fashion.

Working as an overhead crane operator 45 to 90 feet (14 to 27 meters) over the shop floor isn't for everyone. But, for the ones who stick with it, it's a rewarding and challenging job. You need to work well with others, pay attention to detail and communicate well with the people you work with.

When I make a lift, I have to pay attention to the people on the floor as well as what's going on in the crane. A lot of precise moves need to be made to position the part and make sure that everything is clear.

In the crane business, safety is one thing we all focus on. It's always on our minds when we move anything.

On the 737 line, we rotate between buildings so we have an opportunity to work in the wings section, on final assembly

and at any place they need crane operators on the Renton site.

All the people on the Renton crane crew where I work have a lot of experience. We all treat our position with a great deal of pride and responsibility. When new people come in, everyone takes part in their training so the new people, too, can meet the challenges of the position. Someone is always willing to help.

The operator is alone up in the crane, but it's really a team effort to make those lifts and keep the 737 line moving. ■

dawsalee.griffin@boeing.com