

Cascade commuter revenue jumps to fourth

By JO MORELAND
Of the Union-Bulletin

Cascade Airlines has flown to dizzying heights this year.

"We just got the boardings for January nationwide and we went from ninth to fourth for revenue passenger miles flown in the nation for commuter size," Jerry Jenkins, Cascade's sales manager, said today.

"We're all tickled as punch and floating around on Cloud Nine." And Jenkins said the news probably

is going to be even better, because March was a record month for the firm.

"We carried over 18,000 passengers," he said.

Walla Walla is the maintenance base and headquarters for Cascade's pilots' crews, with a \$1-million annual payroll here.

The firm is headquartered in Spokane, but 110 of Cascade's 210 employees systemwide are based here.

"Walla Walla was our fifth largest boarding station in our system for 14 cities in Oregon, Idaho and Washington," Jenkins said of the March sales figures.

He said 3,500 persons got off and on planes here last month and 11,489 pounds of freight were handled through Walla Walla.

Cascade's good news came just after another airlines that serves Walla Walla announced it will phase out the Beechcraft 99 aircraft it has

been using.

Columbia Pacific Airlines and Cascade have both been using the Beech 99s.

All 17 persons aboard a Columbia Beech 99 plane taking off Feb. 10 at Richland were killed.

Columbia has reported a 30-percent decline in boardings since the crash.

A spokesman for Columbia said the firm will take its two remaining Beech 99s out of service.

They will be replaced by Metro II

planes, manufactured in San Antonio, Texas.

Cascade, the nation's largest user of the Beech 99s, will be switching to the Metros, but the change is being made according to an earlier schedule, Jenkins said.

"The only reason that we're going to the Metro is because it's a pressurized aircraft and it's faster," he said.

"We're the experts in the 99s. We've flown them for nine years and haven't

had a fatal accident."

Jenkins said the Metros have 19 seats. The Beech 99s have 15 seats.

The sales manager estimated Cascade's change in the type of aircraft might begin in about nine months.

"It depends on financing," Jenkins said.

"We don't have a big parent company behind us. I haven't seen the financial sheets yet. I know March was a record month, so hopefully we're making money."