Boeing workers learn about composites by practicing on snowboards

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The roar of a board saw drowns out chatter between Boeing workers as they piece together their latest projects.

Although several of them work on the Boeing Co.'s latest jet, the 787, they're not building the Dreamliner in Damian Cianci's class. Instead, Edmonds Community College instructor Cianci is teaching these Boeing workers how to make their own snowboards, using composite technology not so different from what Boeing uses with its 787.

"You can say that your snowboard has a centered base with gallium incorporated into it, carbon fiber-reinforced inserts and vibration-dampening coil -- that would be on the big sales sticker, right?" Cianci said.

After several evenings' worth of labor -- cutting out the black base with scissors, attaching the board's metal edge and sawing a thin layer of wood, most of the students are ready to see their boards come together.

The one-credit course is open to students at the community college, regardless of whether they're employed by Boeing. But it's attracted Boeing workers, both Machinists and engineers alike, perhaps because of its connections to the company's new mostly composite jet.

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