

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Aviation Administration****14 CFR Part 39**

[Docket No. 98-NM-320-AD; Amendment 39-11044; AD 99-04-19]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 777 Series Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to all Boeing Model 777 series airplanes. This action requires repetitive detailed visual inspections to detect cracking of the cove skin on the outboard leading edge slats; a slat adjustment check; and corrective actions, if necessary. This amendment is prompted by reports of fatigue cracking and/or missing pieces of the cove skin on the outboard leading edge slats. The actions specified in this AD are intended to detect and correct such discrepancies, which could result in skin separation or structural damage to the leading edge slats, and consequent reduced controllability of the airplane.

DATES: Effective March 8, 1999.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of March 8, 1999.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before April 20, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 98-NM-320-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

The service information referenced in this AD may be obtained from Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, P.O. Box 3707, Seattle, Washington 98124-2207. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Stan Wood, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120S, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 227-2772; fax (425) 227-1181.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FAA has received several reports of fatigue cracking and/or missing pieces of the cove skin and on the outboard leading edge slats on the left and right wings on Boeing Model 777 series airplanes. On four airplanes that had accumulated between 3,000 and 14,000 flight hours and 650 and 2,800 flight cycles, cracking was located on slat numbers 4, 5, and 9. On one airplane that had accumulated 4,530 total flight hours and 685 total flight cycles, the cracked and missing pieces were located on slat numbers 5 and 10. On another airplane that had accumulated 1,140 total flight hours and 1,525 total flight cycles, a portion of the leading edge wedge was missing, and cracking in the cove skin at the deflection control ribs on slat number 5 was detected. At this time, the exact cause of the cracking is unknown. These conditions, if not detected and corrected, could result in skin separation or structural damage to the outboard leading edge slats, and consequent reduced controllability of the airplane.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 777-57A0034, Revision 2, dated November 19, 1998, which, among other things, describes procedures for repetitive detailed visual inspections to detect cracking of the cove skin on the outboard leading edge slats; a slat adjustment check to verify proper adjustment of the slat rigging; and corrective actions, if necessary. The corrective actions include stop drilling of any crack that is 1.5 inches or less as an interim action; replacement of the leading edge slat; and adjustment of the slat, if necessary. Accomplishment of the actions specified in the alert service bulletin is intended to adequately address the identified unsafe condition.

Explanation of the Requirements of the Rule

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other airplanes of the same type design, this AD is being issued to detect and correct cracking and/or missing pieces of the cove skin on the outboard leading edge slats on the left and right wings, which could result in skin separation or structural damage to the leading edge slats, and consequent reduced controllability of the airplane. This AD requires accomplishment of the actions specified in the alert service bulletin described previously, except as discussed below.

Differences Between This Rule and Alert Service Bulletin

The alert service bulletin specifies that the manufacturer may be contacted for disposition of certain repair conditions. However, this AD requires the repair of those conditions to be accomplished in accordance with a method approved by the FAA.

The alert service bulletin also specifies that the inspection of the interior structure of the cove skin be accomplished repetitively. This AD does not require repetitive interior inspections of this area, because the FAA has determined that the repetitive detailed visual inspections of the exterior structure of the cove skin required by this AD are adequate to detect cracking in the subject area.

The flow chart in Figure 1. of the alert service bulletin does not accurately describe the mandatory corrective actions addressed in this rule. There have been recent instances involving cracking of the slats where it was determined that the slats were properly rigged, therefore, the FAA is uncertain of the cause for the cracking and is not relying on the rigging checks to assure crack free structure. The FAA has determined that the slat adjustment check cited in the flow chart does not adequately address the identified unsafe condition; therefore, this AD does not require accomplishment of this action at the intervals specified.

Interim Action

This is considered to be interim action until final action is identified, at which time the FAA may consider further rulemaking.

Determination of Rule's Effective Date

Since a situation exists that requires the immediate adoption of this regulation, it is found that notice and opportunity for prior public comment hereon are impracticable, and that good cause exists for making this amendment effective in less than 30 days.

Comments Invited

Although this action is in the form of a final rule that involves requirements affecting flight safety and, thus, was not preceded by notice and an opportunity for public comment, comments are invited on this rule. Interested persons are invited to comment on this rule by submitting such written data, views, or arguments as they may desire. Communications shall identify the Rules Docket number and be submitted in triplicate to the address specified under the caption **ADDRESSES**. All communications received on or before the closing date for comments will be

considered, and this rule may be amended in light of the comments received. Factual information that supports the commenter's ideas and suggestions is extremely helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of the AD action and determining whether additional rulemaking action would be needed.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the rule that might suggest a need to modify the rule. All comments submitted will be available, both before and after the closing date for comments, in the Rules Docket for examination by interested persons. A report that summarizes each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this AD will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their comments submitted in response to this rule must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket Number 98-NM-320-AD." The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

Regulatory Impact

The regulations adopted herein will not have substantial direct effects on the States, on the relationship between the national government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. Therefore, in accordance with Executive Order 12612, it is determined that this final rule does not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

The FAA has determined that this regulation is an emergency regulation that must be issued immediately to correct an unsafe condition in aircraft, and that it is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866. It has been determined further that this action involves an emergency regulation under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979). If it is determined that this emergency regulation otherwise would be significant under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures, a final regulatory evaluation will be prepared and placed in the Rules Docket. A copy of it, if filed, may be obtained from the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption ADDRESSES.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

Adoption of the Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration amends part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) as follows:

PART 39—AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

2. Section 39.13 is amended by adding the following new airworthiness directive:

99-04-19 Boeing: Amendment 39-11044. Docket 98-NM-320-AD.

Applicability: All Model 777 series airplanes, certificated in any category.

Note 1: This AD applies to each airplane identified in the preceding applicability provision, regardless of whether it has been modified, altered, or repaired in the area subject to the requirements of this AD. For airplanes that have been modified, altered, or repaired so that the performance of the requirements of this AD is affected, the owner/operator must request approval for an alternative method of compliance in accordance with paragraph (d) of this AD. The request should include an assessment of the effect of the modification, alteration, or repair on the unsafe condition addressed by this AD; and, if the unsafe condition has not been eliminated, the request should include specific proposed actions to address it.

Compliance: Required as indicated, unless accomplished previously.

To detect and correct cracking and/or missing pieces of the cove skin on the outboard leading edge slats on the left and right wings, which could result in skin separation or structural damage to the leading edge slats, and consequent reduced controllability of the airplane, accomplish the following:

Note 2: Where there are differences between the alert service bulletin and the AD, the AD prevails.

(a) Prior to the accumulation of 500 total flight cycles, or within 30 days after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later: Perform a detailed visual inspection to detect cracking of the cove skin on the outboard leading edge slats of the left and right wings at slat numbers 1 through 6 inclusive, and 9 through 14 inclusive; in accordance with Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 777-57A0034, Revision 2, dated November 19, 1998. Repeat the inspection thereafter at intervals not to exceed 350 flight cycles.

(b) If any cracking is detected during any inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD, prior to further flight, accomplish the actions specified in paragraph (b)(1), (b)(2), or (b)(3) of this AD, as applicable, in accordance with Boeing Alert Service

Bulletin 777-57A0034, Revision 2, dated November 19, 1998.

(1) For any crack that is less than or equal to 1.5 inches in length, stop drill the crack. Within 5 days following accomplishment of the stop drilling accomplish paragraphs (b)(1)(i) and (b)(1)(ii) of this AD.

(i) Perform a detailed visual inspection of the interior structure of the cove skin at slat numbers 1 through 6 inclusive, and 9 through 14 inclusive, in accordance with Part 2 of the Accomplishment Instructions of the alert service bulletin.

(A) If no crack is detected, prior to further flight, accomplish a slat adjustment check, and if any slat is not adjusted within the limits, adjust the slat to within the limits; in accordance with Part 3 of the Accomplishment Instructions of the alert service bulletin.

(B) If any crack is detected, prior to further flight, replace the slat with a new slat, and accomplish a slat adjustment in accordance with Part 2 of the Accomplishment Instructions of the alert service bulletin.

(ii) Repair any cracked cove skin in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate.

(2) For any crack that is greater than 1.5 inches in length, prior to further flight, accomplish paragraphs (b)(2)(i) and (b)(2)(ii) of this AD.

(i) Perform the inspection required by paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this AD in accordance with Part 2 of the Accomplishment Instructions of the alert service bulletin.

(A) If no crack is detected, prior to further flight, accomplish a slat adjustment check, and if any slat is not adjusted within the limits, adjust the slat to within the limits; in accordance with Part 3 of the Accomplishment Instructions of the alert service bulletin.

(B) If any crack is detected, prior to further flight, replace the slat with a new slat and accomplish a slat adjustment in accordance with Part 2 of the Accomplishment Instructions of the alert service bulletin.

(ii) Repair any cracked cove skin in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO.

(3) Replace the slat with a new slat and accomplish a slat adjustment in accordance with Part 2 of the Accomplishment Instructions of the alert service bulletin.

(c) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used if approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Seattle ACO.

Note 3: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Seattle ACO.

(d) Special flight permits may be issued in accordance with sections 21.197 and 21.199 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.197 and 21.199) to operate the airplane to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

(e) The actions shall be done in accordance with Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 777-

57A0034, Revision 2, dated November 19, 1998. This incorporation by reference was approved by the Director of the Federal Register in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51. Copies may be obtained from Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, P.O. Box 3707, Seattle, Washington 98124-2207. Copies may be inspected at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

(f) This amendment becomes effective on March 8, 1999.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on February 9, 1999.

John J. Hickey,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 99-3726 Filed 2-18-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 98-NM-301-AD; Amendment 39-11043; AD 99-04-18]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Model A300-600 Series Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to certain Airbus Model A300-600 series airplanes, that requires removal of the fuel level sensing amplifier (FLSA) of the trim tank system, modification of the polarization pin code in the electronics bay, and installation of a new, improved FLSA. This amendment is prompted by issuance of mandatory continuing airworthiness information by a foreign civil airworthiness authority. The actions specified by this AD are intended to prevent continuous aft transfer of fuel due to the FLSA not supplying electrical power to the trim tank overflow sensor, which could result in potential loss of fuel during flight.

DATES: Effective March 26, 1999.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of March 26, 1999.

ADDRESSES: The service information referenced in this AD may be obtained from Airbus Industrie, 1 Rond Point Maurice Bellonte, 31707 Blagnac Cedex,

France. This information may be examined at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, Rules Docket, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Norman B. Martenson, Manager, International Branch, ANM-116, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 227-2110; fax (425) 227-1149.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: A

proposal to amend part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) to include an airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to certain Airbus Model A300-600 series airplanes was published in the **Federal Register** on December 18, 1998 (63 FR 70068). That action proposed to require removal of the fuel level sensing amplifier (FLSA) of the trim tank system, modification of the polarization pin code in the electronics bay, and installation of a new, improved FLSA.

Comments

Interested persons have been afforded an opportunity to participate in the making of this amendment. Due consideration has been given to the single comment received.

The commenter indicates that it has completed the subject modifications in accordance with French airworthiness directive 98-249-252(B).

Conclusion

After careful review of the available data, including the comment noted above, the FAA has determined that air safety and the public interest require the adoption of the rule as proposed.

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 61 airplanes of U.S. registry will be affected by this AD, that it will take approximately 3 work hours per airplane to accomplish the required actions, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Required parts will be supplied by the manufacturer at no cost to the operators. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$10,980, or \$180 per airplane.

The cost impact figure discussed above is based on assumptions that no operator has yet accomplished any of the requirements of this AD action, and that no operator would accomplish those actions in the future if this AD were not adopted.

Regulatory Impact

The regulations adopted herein will not have substantial direct effects on the States, on the relationship between the national government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. Therefore, in accordance with Executive Order 12612, it is determined that this final rule does not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify that this action (1) is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866; (2) is not a "significant rule" under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979); and (3) will not have a significant economic impact, positive or negative, on a substantial number of small entities under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act. A final evaluation has been prepared for this action and it is contained in the Rules Docket. A copy of it may be obtained from the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption ADDRESSES.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

Adoption of the Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration amends part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) as follows:

PART 39—AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

2. Section 39.13 is amended by adding the following new airworthiness directive:

99-04-18 Airbus Industrie: Amendment 39-11043. Docket 98-NM-301-AD.

Applicability: Model A300-600 series airplanes on which Airbus Modification 4801 was accomplished during production and on which Airbus Modification 10778 (reference Airbus Service Bulletin A300-31-6051, dated June 28, 1996) has been accomplished; except those airplanes on which Airbus Modification 11683 (reference Airbus Service Bulletin A300-28-6055, dated January 28, 1997, and Revision 01, dated July 24, 1998) has been accomplished; certificated in any category.