

rivets in the forward, top, and side panels of the nose wheel well (NWW) for discrepancies; and follow-on inspections and corrective action, if necessary. This proposal also provides eventual terminating action for the repetitive inspections. This action is necessary to find and fix discrepancies of the rivets in the NWW panels, which could result in failure of the rivets and consequent reduced structural integrity of the panels and rapid depressurization of the airplane. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

DATES: Comments must be received by February 24, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2001-NM-231-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056. Comments may be inspected at this location between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Comments may be submitted via fax to (425) 227-1232. Comments may also be sent via the Internet using the following address: *9-anm-nprmcomment@faa.gov*. Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain "Docket No. 2001-NM-231-AD" in the subject line and need not be submitted in triplicate. Comments sent via the Internet as attached electronic files must be formatted in Microsoft Word 97 for Windows or ASCII text.

The service information referenced in the proposed rule 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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rick Kawaguchi, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120S, FAA, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 227-1153; fax (425) 227-1181.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

Interested persons are invited to participate in the making of the proposed 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 above. All communications received on or before the closing date for comments, specified above, will be considered before taking action on the

proposed rule. The proposals contained in this action may be changed in light of the comments received.

Submit comments using the following format:

- Organize comments issue-by-issue. For example, discuss a request to change the compliance time and a request to change the service bulletin reference as two separate issues.
- For each issue, state what specific change to the proposed AD is being requested.
- Include justification (*e.g.*, reasons or data) for each request.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the proposed 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 summarizing each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this proposal will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their comments submitted in response to this action must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket Number 2001-NM-231-AD." The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

Availability of NPRMs

Any person may obtain a copy of this NPRM by submitting a request to the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2001-NM-231-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

The FAA has received reports indicating that missing rivet heads were found in the side panels of the nose wheel well (NWW) between body stations 260 and 340 of the canted pressure bulkhead on certain Boeing Model 747-400 and -400F series airplanes. Investigation revealed that the rivets were incorrectly heat-treated and were made of 7050 aluminum, which is susceptible to stress corrosion cracking. Rivets in the subject area should be made of 2017 aluminum, which is a more durable material. One airplane had 44 discrepant rivets (missing heads, incorrectly heat-treated) at random locations on both side panels, 28 of the rivets were found using a detailed inspection, and 16 were found using an indirect conductivity eddy current inspection method. Such discrepancies, if not found and fixed, could result in failure of the rivets and consequent

reduced structural integrity of the NWW panels and rapid depressurization of the airplane.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

We have reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747-53A2472, including Appendix A, dated June 7, 2001, which describes procedures for initial and repetitive detailed inspections and a follow-on indirect conductivity eddy current inspection for discrepancies (missing rivet heads or incorrectly heat-treated rivets) in the forward, top, and side panels of the NWW between fuselage stations 260 and 340 of the canted pressure bulkhead; and corrective action, if necessary. The corrective action includes the following:

- If up to three adjacent rivets with missing heads are found, remove the discrepant rivets and install permanent or time limited repair fasteners.
- If four or more adjacent rivets with missing heads are found, remove discrepant rivets and do a high frequency eddy current inspection of the web for cracking around the intact fasteners at each end of the line of missing rivets.
- If web cracking is found, the service bulletin specifies contacting the manufacturer for repair instructions.
- If no web cracking is found, install permanent or time limited repair fasteners.

Accomplishment of the actions specified in the service bulletin is intended to adequately address the identified unsafe condition.

Explanation of Requirements of Proposed Rule

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other products of this same type design, the proposed AD would require accomplishment of the actions specified in the service bulletin described previously, except as discussed below.

Difference Between Service Information and Proposed Rule

Although the service bulletin specifies that the manufacturer may be contacted for disposition of certain repair conditions, this proposal would require the repair of those conditions to be done per a method approved by the FAA, or per data meeting the type certification basis of the airplane approved by a Boeing Company Designated Engineering Representative who has been authorized by the FAA to make such findings.