

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) must receive any comments on this rule on or before April 25, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments to FAA, Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003-CE-09-AD, 901 Locust, Room 506, Kansas City, Missouri 64106. You may view any comments at this location between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also send comments electronically to the following address: 9-ACE-7-Docket@faa.gov. Comments sent electronically must contain "Docket No. 2003-CE-09-AD" in the subject line. If you send comments electronically as attached electronic files, the files must be formatted in Microsoft Word 97 for Windows or ASCII text.

You may get the service information referenced in this AD from Air Tractor, Inc., P.O. Box 485, Olney, Texas 76374. You may view this information at FAA, Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003-CE-09-AD, 901 Locust, Room 506, Kansas City, Missouri 64106; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., Suite 700, Washington, DC.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andy McAnaul, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Fort Worth Airplane Certification Office, 2601 Meacham Boulevard, Fort Worth, Texas 76193-0150; telephone: (817) 222-5156; facsimile: (817) 222-5960.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Discussion

*Has FAA taken any action to this point?* An incident on an Air Tractor Model AT-400A where the wing separated from the airplane caused FAA to issue AD 2002-13-02, Amendment 39-12789 (67 FR 44024, July 1, 2002). Investigation reveals that the right-hand lower spar cap failed due to fatigue at the 3/8-inch outboard bolt, which is located 6.5 inches outboard of the fuselage centerline.

The following airplanes have a similar type design to that of the accident airplane:

- All Models AT-300, AT-301, AT-302, and AT-400A airplanes that have aluminum spar caps;
- Air Tractor Models AT-400 airplanes, serial numbers 400-0244 through 400-0415, that have aluminum spar caps; and
- All Models AT-300 and AT-301 airplanes that have aluminum spar caps and are or have been converted to turbine power.

AD 2002-13-02 currently requires you to inspect (one-time) the wing centerline splice joint for cracks and, if any crack is found, replace the affected wing spar lower cap; report the results of the inspection to FAA; and replace the wing spar lower caps after a certain amount of usage.

Accomplishment of these actions is required in accordance with Snow Engineering Co. Process Specification 197, dated February 23, 2001, Revised May 1, 2002, and Revised May 3, 2002; and Snow Engineering Co. Service Letter #220, dated May 3, 2002.

*What has happened since AD 2002-13-02 to initiate this action?* AD 2002-13-02 required you to report to FAA the results of the one-time inspection of wing spar lower caps. Through these AD inspections, a Model AT-400A airplane had a cracked spar cap where the damage was sufficient to require spar cap replacement. Based upon this damage and the AD 2002-13-02 inspection results, we have determined that the mandatory wing spar lower cap replacement time for the affected turbine engine powered airplanes should be reduced.

The manufacturer has revised or issued the following service information to address this situation:

- Snow Engineering Co. Service Letter #55, Revised October 23, 2002, which includes revised procedures and information for accomplishing a wing lower spar cap splice rework on all AT-300 and AT-301 series airplanes;
- Snow Engineering Co. Service Letter #70, Revised October 23, 2002, which addresses questions about all serial number airplanes beginning with 0041 as they pertain to the wing lower spar cap splice rework specified in Snow Engineering Co. Service Letter #55;
- Snow Engineering Co. Service Letter #226, dated December 17, 2002, which specifies the lower replacement time for the turbine engine powered airplanes;
- Snow Engineering Process Specification Number 197, Revised June 4, 2002, which provides procedures for accomplishing eddy current inspections of the wing lower spar caps; and
- Snow Engineering Co. Service Letter #220, dated December 17, 2002, which specifies the eddy current inspection in Snow Engineering Process Specification Number 197 and includes procedures for completing this inspection.

#### The FAA's Determination and an Explanation of the Provisions of This AD

*What has FAA decided?* The FAA has reviewed all available information, including the service information referenced above; and determined that:

- the unsafe condition referenced in this document exists or could develop on type design Air Tractor Models AT-300, AT-301, AT-302, AT-400, and AT-400A;
- the actions specified in the previously-referenced service information should be accomplished on the affected airplanes; and
- AD action should be taken in order to correct this unsafe condition.

*What does this AD require?* This AD supersedes AD 2002-13-02 with a new AD that:

- requires you to replace the wing spar lower caps after a certain amount of usage;
- allows you to extend the time for replacement on certain airplanes if a wing lower spar cap splice rework is accomplished;
- allows you to repetitively inspect your airplane until the wing lower spar caps can be replaced provided no cracks are found and only a certain number of inspections are accomplished; and
- requires you to report any cracks found during the inspections to FAA.

In preparation of this rule, we contacted type clubs and aircraft operators to obtain technical information and information on operational and economic impacts. We did not receive any information through these contacts. If received, we would have included, in the rulemaking docket, a discussion of any information that may have influenced this action.

*Will I have the opportunity to comment prior to the issuance of the rule?* Because the unsafe condition described in this document could result in the wing separating from the airplane during flight, we find that notice and opportunity for public prior comment are impracticable. Therefore, good cause exists for making this amendment effective in less than 30 days.

#### Comments Invited

*How do I comment on this AD?* Although this action is in the form of a final rule and was not preceded by notice and opportunity for public comment, FAA invites your comments on the rule. You may submit whatever written data, views, or arguments you choose. You need to include the rule's docket number and submit your comments to the address specified