

flight cycles or within 15,000 flight cycles after doing the modification required by AD 99-24-07, whichever is earlier.

Comments

Due consideration has been given to the comments received in response to the NPRM. One commenter has no technical objection to the NPRM, but does not agree that the proposed inspections are necessary to ensure the continued airworthiness of the engine strut. Another commenter does not own or operate the affected airplanes.

Request To Change Paragraph (b)

One commenter, the manufacturer, states that there are airplanes in service that are many years away from the compliance threshold for the inspections specified in paragraph (b) of the NPRM. The commenter adds that those airplanes will not receive timely inspections of the lower spar fitting/aft bulkhead fasteners within the compliance time of 15,000 total flight cycles or 6 months after the effective date of the AD, whichever is later, as specified in paragraph (b). The commenter asks that paragraph (b) be changed to reduce the compliance time for those airplanes in order to ensure that the inspections are done in a timely manner.

We agree with the commenter. The manufacturer has provided data which show that the compliance time specified in Revision 1 of the service bulletin is not adequate to preclude an unsafe condition of loose or missing fasteners in the aft bulkhead of the lower spar fitting before the airplane reaches 50,000 total flight cycles. Also, we have approved Revision 2 of the referenced service bulletin, as stated above, in which the manufacturer recommends reducing the compliance time for airplanes that have not yet accumulated 50,000 total flight cycles. We have added a detailed inspection for loose or missing fasteners, and reduced the compliance time for the inspection specified in Revision 2 of the service bulletin (before the accumulation of 50,000 total flight cycles or within 15,000 flight cycles after doing the modification, whichever is first) to specify the compliance time as "before the accumulation of 15,000 total flight cycles or within 6 months after the effective date of the AD, whichever is first."

Request To Delete the Word "Midchord"

One commenter asks that all references to the word "midchord" be deleted from the NPRM. The commenter

notes that the midchord is not part of the inspection area specified in the referenced service bulletin.

We agree with the commenter and have removed all references to the word "midchord" from the supplemental NPRM.

Request To Clarify Service Information

One commenter states that Revision 1 of the referenced service bulletin was added to paragraph (a), "Restatement of Requirements of AD 99-24-07," of the original NPRM as an additional source of service information for doing the modification required by that paragraph. The commenter notes that Revision 1 was not specified in the original requirements of AD 99-24-07. However, the commenter does not ask for any change to the NPRM.

We agree that Revision 1 of the service bulletin was not in the original requirements of AD 99-24-07. The paragraph titled "Actions Since Issuance of Previous Rule," in the preamble of the NPRM, provides an explanation of the reason Revision 1 was added: It describes new procedures for an examination of the middle gusset of the inboard side load fitting to determine if the angle between the middle gusset and the outboard face of the lug is out of alignment. If the angle is out of alignment, the corrective action involves machining the middle gusset to the specified angle. For operators that already did the modification, the original issue of the service bulletin is carried over from AD 99-24-07 into paragraph (a) of the supplemental NPRM.

Request To Change Paragraph (b)(2)(ii)

One commenter states that the actions proposed by paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of the NPRM are to be accomplished even if a repair has been installed, due to cracking found per the inspection proposed by paragraph (b)(2) of the NPRM. The commenter notes that this may lead operators to alter repairs previously approved by the Manager of the Seattle Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), per paragraph (b)(2)(i) of the NPRM. The commenter adds that this would require operators to obtain approvals for alternative methods of compliance per paragraph (c)(1) of the NPRM. The commenter states that this may cause redundant work and would consume valuable resources at both the airline and the FAA. The commenter asks that paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of the NPRM be separated into two paragraphs, one for repaired holes and one for holes with no cracking.

We do not agree with the commenter. If a repair was done per a previous

approval by the Manager of the Seattle ACO, paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this AD (now added to paragraph (e) of the supplemental NPRM) must still be done. The actions specified in Revision 2 of the service bulletin increase the diameter of the fastener holes specified in Revision 1 of the service bulletin, therefore, we do not agree to further change paragraph (e) of this supplemental NPRM.

Explanation of Changes Made to NPRM

We have changed the service bulletin citation throughout this supplemental NPRM to exclude the Evaluation Form. The form is intended to be completed by operators and submitted to the manufacturer to provide input on the quality of the service bulletin; however, this AD does not include such a requirement.

We have changed all references to "detailed visual inspection" in the NPRM to "detailed inspection" in this supplemental NPRM.

In addition, although Revision 2 of the service bulletin specifies an inspection of only 14 aft bulkhead fasteners, paragraph (b) of this supplemental NPRM requires inspection of all 20 aft bulkhead fasteners. Further, the service bulletin specifies an inspection of only 2 fasteners of the lower spar fitting located in Panel 7 at Location 37, but this supplemental NPRM requires inspection of all 8 fasteners, as clarified in Notes 2 and 4.

Revision 2 also specifies that operators can use tools of their own design as alternatives to Boeing-supplied tools when doing the actions specified in the service bulletin. Paragraph (a) of this supplemental NPRM prohibits the use of such tools, except those specified in Figures 3 and 5 of the Accomplishment Instructions of Revision 2 of the service bulletin.

Conclusion

Since these changes expand the scope of the originally proposed rule, we have determined that it is necessary to reopen the comment period to provide additional opportunity for public comment.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 394 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 176 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD.

The modification that is currently required by AD 99-24-07 takes approximately 1,049 work hours per airplane to accomplish, at an average labor rate of \$60 per work hour. This work hour figure includes the time it