

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 within 200 hours time-in-service, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent a fire in the engine compartment from reaching the main gearbox (MGB) compartment that contains parts that are not fire resistant and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter, accomplish the following:

(a) Replace the MGB opening neoprene cowling seals with glass/silicone seals in accordance with the Accomplishment Instructions, paragraph 2.B., of Eurocopter Alert Service Bulletin No. 53.00.31, dated July 11, 2002.

(b) Replacing the MGB opening neoprene cowling seals with glass/silicone seals is terminating action for the requirements of this AD.

(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, Regulations Group, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA. Operators shall submit their requests through an FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may concur or comment and then send it to the Manager, Regulations Group.

Note 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Regulations Group.

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

Note 3: The subject of this AD is addressed in Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile (France), AD 2002-537-094(A), dated October 30, 2002.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on April 15, 2003.

David A. Downey,

Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2000-SW-12-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Model AS350B, B1, B2, B3, BA, C, D, D1, and AS355E, F, F1, F2, and N Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking; reopening of comment period.

SUMMARY: This document revises an earlier proposed airworthiness directive (AD) for the specified Eurocopter France (ECF) model helicopters that proposed a daily inspection of the tail rotor pitch control rod (control rod) outboard spherical bearing (bearing), a radial and axial play limit, a revised AD compliance interval, and adding the ECF Model AS350B3 helicopter and an additional control rod to the applicability. That proposal was prompted by two comments received and the FAA determination that the AD inspection interval should coincide with the normal maintenance interval and that the AD should apply to the ECF Model AS350B3 helicopter. This action retains the original proposals but changes the daily inspection to a daily check and makes other editorial changes for clarification. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent separation of the bearing ball from its outer race, rubbing of the body of the control rod against the tail rotor blade pitch horn clevis, failure of the control rod, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before June 23, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2000-SW-12-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137. You may also send comments electronically to the Rules Docket at the following address: 9-asw-adcomments@faa.gov. Comments may be inspected at the Office of the Regional Counsel between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Uday Garadi, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, Fort Worth, Texas 76193-0110, telephone (817) 222-5123, fax (817) 222-5961.

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 should 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 document may be changed in light of the comments received.

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 mailed comments submitted in response to this proposal must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket No. 2000-SW-12-AD." The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

Discussion

On November 19, 1998, the FAA issued AD 98-24-35, Amendment 39-10921, Docket 98-SW-41-AD (63 FR 66418, December 2, 1998), to require measuring the control rod bearing radial and axial play every 50 hours time-in-service (TIS). That action was prompted by an accident and an incident involving ECF Model AS350B2 helicopters. There were two other unconfirmed incidents cited by the National Transportation Safety Board (based on manufacturer's reports) involving the same control rod, part number (P/N) 350A33-2145-00.

After issuing AD 98-24-35, ECF issued Service Letter No. 1367-64-98, dated January 12, 1999, to provide operators with an easy way to determine the looseness of the bearing by adding an axial play limit of 0.016 inch and a daily check. When the FAA issued AD 98-24-35, neither the Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile nor the manufacturer had issued any service information addressing this unsafe condition.

Subsequently, the FAA received comments from two commenters, the manufacturer and an operator, stating that a larger axial play limit and a 30-hour time-in-service (TIS) visual check would provide a satisfactory degree of safety for this control rod and an adequate inspection interval.

The FAA agreed and issued a proposal to amend 14 CFR part 39, published as an NPRM in the **Federal Register** on April 9, 2001 (66 FR 18416), to supersede AD 98-24-35. The NPRM