

series airplanes. This action requires repetitive inspections to detect discrepancies of the actuator attach fittings of the inboard and outboard flaps, and follow-on and corrective actions as necessary. This action is necessary to detect and correct cracking and other damage of the actuator attach fittings of the trailing edge flaps, which could result in abnormal operation or retraction of a trailing edge flap, and possible loss of controllability of the airplane. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

DATES: Effective May 8, 2003.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of May 8, 2003.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before June 23, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003-NM-15-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-iarccomment@faa.gov. Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain "Docket No. 2003-NM-15-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 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: Gary Oltman, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120S, FAA, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 917-6443; fax (425) 917-6590.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FAA has received reports of three fractures of the attach fittings of the trailing edge flap actuator on Boeing Model 747 series airplanes. The fractures have been attributed to corrosion and/or cracking.

In one case, the fracture caused the flap to jam and resulted in an air turnback. In another case, the fractures occurred in the area of the upper journal. If not corrected, corroded or cracked attach fittings could fracture and result in abnormal operation or retraction of a trailing edge flap, and possible loss of controllability of the airplane.

Related Rulemaking

On June 20, 2001, the FAA issued related AD 2001-13-12, amendment 39-12292 (66 FR 34526, June 29, 2001), which applies to certain Boeing Model 747 series airplanes. That AD:

- Requires repetitive inspections to detect cracks and corrosion around the lower bearing of the actuator attach fittings of the inboard and outboard flaps;
- Requires repetitive overhauls for certain actuator attach fittings or repetitive replacement of the fittings with new fittings, as applicable, which terminates the repetitive inspections; and
- Provides for replacement of actuator attach fittings with improved fittings, which terminates all requirements of the AD.

The three incidents previously discussed occurred since AD 2001-13-12 was issued. Those incidents occurred on airplanes that had been inspected in accordance with AD 2001-13-12. Consequently, the FAA has determined that the terminating action in AD 2001-13-12 (replacement with improved fittings) will not adequately address the unsafe condition. However, the service information cited in this new AD has been approved as an alternative method of compliance (AMOC) with the requirements of paragraphs (a) through (e) of AD 2001-13-12. The FAA may consider superseding that AD to incorporate the requirements of this AD as well as other requirements.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747-57A2316, dated December 19, 2002, which describes procedures for, among other things, repetitive inspections of the attach fittings of the inboard and outboard flaps to detect discrepancies. The inboard fittings are to be inspected using borescopic and detailed visual methods; and the outboard fittings are to be inspected using borescopic, detailed visual, and ultrasonic methods. Discrepancies include surface corrosion, pitting, damaged cadmium plating, and cracking. Corrective/follow-on actions may include repetitive detailed visual inspections to detect bushing migration

and cracking and other damage of the actuator attach fittings; repetitive application of corrosion-inhibiting compound; and replacement of the fittings with new or overhauled fittings, which terminates the repetitive inspections. The manufacturer advises that Boeing Service Bulletin 747-57A2316 replaces Boeing Service Bulletin 747-57A2310, which was cited as the appropriate source of service information for the requirements of AD 2001-13-12. Although Service Bulletin 747-57A2316 replaces Service Bulletin 747-57A2310, AD 2001-13-12 is still in effect. As stated previously, Service Bulletin 747-57A2316 has been approved as an AMOC for the requirements of paragraphs (a) through (e) of AD 2001-13-12.

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 other damage of the actuator attach fittings of the trailing edge flaps, which could result in abnormal operation or retraction of a trailing edge flap, and possible loss of controllability of the airplane. This AD requires accomplishment of certain actions specified in Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747-57A2316, described previously.

Interim Action

This is considered to be interim action. Although Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747-57A2316 specifies actions in addition to those required by this AD, only certain actions specified in the service bulletin are required by this AD. The FAA may consider issuing further rulemaking to require repetitive replacement of the fittings with new or overhauled fittings. However, because of the urgency of the identified unsafe condition, the FAA finds it necessary to issue this AD immediately without prior public comment. The planned compliance times for the additional actions would be long enough to practically provide notice and opportunity for public comment.

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.