

directive (AD) that is applicable to certain Airbus Model A319 and A320 series airplanes. This proposal would require an inspection of the clearance space between the fuel quantity indication (FQI) probes located in the center fuel tank and the adjacent structure; an inspection of the position of the support bracket for each probe; an inspection of the part number for each support bracket; and corrective action if necessary. This action is necessary to prevent the loss of FQI of the center fuel tank, and electrical arcing between the FQI probes and the adjacent structure in the event the airplane is struck by lightning. Such arcing could create a potential ignition source within the center fuel tank and an increased risk of a fuel tank explosion and fire. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

**DATES:** Comments must be received by February 3, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2001-NM-301-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056. Comments may be inspected at this location between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 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-301-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 Airbus Industrie, 1 Rond Point Maurice Bellonte, 31707 Blagnac Cedex, France. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dan Rodina, Aerospace Engineer, International Branch, ANM-116, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 227-2125; fax (425) 227-1149.

#### **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-301-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-301-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

##### **Discussion**

The Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on certain Airbus Model A319 and A320 series airplanes. The DGAC advises that it has received reports from operators of loss of fuel quantity indications (FQI) of the center fuel tank. Investigation of the inside of the center fuel tank revealed that the source of the fault was an FQI probe touching the adjacent structure. Further investigation revealed that, during production of these airplanes, the support bracket for FQI probe 38QT had

been installed in the position for FQI probe 39QT, and the support bracket for FQI probe 39QT had been installed in the position for FQI probe 38QT, which resulted in inadequate clearance. These conditions, if not corrected, could result in loss of FQI of the center fuel tank, and electrical arcing between the FQI probes and the adjacent structure in the event the airplane is struck by lightning. Such arcing could create a potential ignition source within the center fuel tank and an increased risk of a fuel tank explosion and fire.

##### **Explanation of Relevant Service Information**

Airbus has issued Service Bulletin A320-28A1096 including Appendix 01 and Reporting Sheet, all Revision 01, all dated July 4, 2001. The service bulletin describes procedures for an inspection for proper clearance space between the FQI probes located in the center fuel tank and the adjacent structure; an inspection of the position of the support bracket for each probe; an inspection of the part number for each support bracket; and corrective action if necessary. The corrective action includes removal and re-installation of the probe and its support bracket. Accomplishment of the actions specified in the service bulletin is intended to adequately address the identified unsafe condition. The DGAC classified this service bulletin as mandatory and issued French airworthiness directive 2001-271(B), dated June 27, 2001, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in France.

##### **FAA's Conclusions**

These airplane models are manufactured in France and are type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of § 21.29 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.29) and the applicable bilateral airworthiness agreement. Pursuant to this bilateral airworthiness agreement, the DGAC has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above. The FAA has examined the findings of the DGAC, reviewed all available information, and determined that AD action is necessary for products of this type design that are certificated for operation in the United States.

##### **Explanation of Requirements of Proposed Rule**

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other airplanes of the same type design registered in the United States, the proposed AD would require accomplishment of the actions specified