

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION****Federal Aviation Administration****14 CFR Part 39**

[Docket No. 2002-SW-41-AD; Amendment 39-13021; AD 2003-02-05]

RIN 2120-AA64

**Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Model AS350B, AS350BA, AS350B1, AS350B2, AS350B3, AS350C, AS350D, AS350D1, AS355E, AS355F, AS355F1, AS355F2, and AS355N Helicopters**

**AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

**ACTION:** Final rule; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) for certain Eurocopter France (Eurocopter) model helicopters. This action requires measuring the diameter of the sliding door roller (roller) and the dimensions of the front end opening of the sliding door middle rail (rail) to determine if excessive wear exists, and if necessary, installing a placard prohibiting the operation of the sliding door during flight. This amendment is prompted by an incident in which a roller came out of the middle rail during a door-opening operation in flight. The actions specified in this AD are intended to prevent the roller from coming out of the middle rail when opening the door, which could lead to the sliding door separating from the helicopter during flight, damage to critical flight components, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

**DATES:** Effective February 10, 2003.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of February 10, 2003.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before March 25, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2002-SW-41-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](mailto:9-asw-adcomments@faa.gov).

The service information referenced in this AD may be obtained from American Eurocopter Corporation, 2701 Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, Texas 75053-4005, telephone (972) 641-3460, fax (972)

641-3527. This information may be examined at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Gary Roach, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, Fort Worth, Texas 76193-0111, telephone (817) 222-5130, fax (817) 222-5961.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on Eurocopter Model AS350 and AS355 helicopters. The DGAC advises that there has been one report of a sliding door aft roller dislodgment in flight due to severe wear on the rail.

Eurocopter has issued Alert Telex No. 05.00.41, applicable to Model AS350 helicopters, and Alert Telex No. 05.00.39, applicable to Model AS355 helicopters, both dated May 16, 2002, which specify measuring the diameter of the sliding door aft roller and rail opening dimension to determine wear, and prohibit operating the door during flight if certain dimensions are exceeded. The DGAC classified these alert telexes as mandatory and issued AD No. 2002-344-093(A), applicable to Model AS350 helicopters, and AD No. 2002-345-070(A), applicable to Model AS355 helicopters, both dated June 26, 2002, to ensure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters in France.

These helicopter models are manufactured in France and are type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of 14 CFR 21.29 and the applicable bilateral agreement. Pursuant to the applicable bilateral 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 these type designs that are certificated for operation in the United States.

This unsafe condition is likely to exist or develop on other helicopters of the same type designs registered in the United States. Therefore, this AD is being issued to prevent the roller from coming out of the middle rail when operating the door, which could lead to the sliding door separating from the helicopter during flight and possibly damaging critical flight components, resulting in subsequent loss of control of

the helicopter. This AD requires, before further flight and thereafter at intervals not to exceed 100 hours time-in-service, measuring the diameter of the roller and the dimensions of the front end opening of the sliding door rail for wear, and if necessary, installing a placard prohibiting operating the sliding door during flight. The actions must be accomplished in accordance with the alert telexes described previously. The short compliance time involved is required because the previously described critical unsafe condition can adversely affect the controllability or structural integrity of the helicopter. Therefore, measuring the diameter of the roller and the dimensions of the rail to determine if excessive wear exists, and if necessary, installing a placard prohibiting the opening of the sliding door during flight is required prior to further flight, and this AD must be issued immediately.

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.

The FAA estimates that 50 helicopters will be affected by this AD, that it will take approximately 1 work hour to measure the roller and rail, and 1 work hour to make and apply a placard to the inside door, if necessary, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Required parts will cost approximately \$10 per helicopter if installing a placard is necessary. Based on these figures, the total cost impact of the AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$21,500 per year, assuming each helicopter in the fleet is measured 6 times per year, assuming no placards will be necessary.

**Comments Invited**

Although this action is in the form of a final rule that involves requirements affecting flight safety and, thus, was not preceded by notice and an opportunity for public comment, comments are invited on this rule. Interested persons are invited to comment on this 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 under the caption **ADDRESSES**. All communications received on or before the closing date for comments will be considered, and this rule may be amended in light of the comments received. Factual information that supports the commenter's ideas and suggestions is extremely helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of the AD