

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Aviation Administration****14 CFR Part 39****[Docket No. 2001–NM–181–AD]****RIN 2120–AA64****Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 747–200F and –200C Series Airplanes****AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.**ACTION:** Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes the superseding of an existing airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to all Boeing Model 747–200F and –200C series airplanes, that currently requires repetitive detailed inspections or a one-time open-hole high frequency eddy current inspection to detect cracking of certain areas of the upper deck floor beams, and corrective actions if necessary. This action would add new one-time inspections for cracking of the web, upper chord, and strap of the upper deck floor beams. This action also would add a requirement to modify or repair the upper deck floor beams, as applicable, which would eventually necessitate accomplishment of new repetitive inspections for cracking of the upper deck floor beams. This action is necessary to prevent fatigue cracks in the upper chord and web of upper deck floor beams and the resultant failure of such floor beams. Failure of a floor beam could result in damage to critical flight control cables and wire bundles that pass through the floor beam, and consequent loss of controllability of the airplane. Failure of the floor beam also could result in the failure of the adjacent fuselage frames and skin, and consequent rapid decompression of the airplane. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe conditions.

DATES: Comments must be received by August 4, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2001–NM–181–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-*

nprmcomment@faa.gov. Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain “Docket No. 2001–NM–181–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 Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, PO Box 3707, Seattle, Washington 98124–2207. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rick Kawaguchi, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM–120S, FAA, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056; telephone (425) 917–6434; fax (425) 917–6590.

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–181–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–181–AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056.

Discussion

On April 20, 1998, the FAA issued AD 98–09–17, amendment 39–10498 (63 FR 20311, April 24, 1998), applicable to all Boeing Model 747–200F and –200C series airplanes, to require repetitive inspections or a one-time inspection to detect cracking of certain areas of the upper deck floor beams, and corrective actions if necessary. That action was prompted by reports indicating that fatigue cracks were found in the upper chord and web of upper deck floor beams. The requirements of that AD are intended to prevent such fatigue cracking and the resultant failure of such floor beams. Failure of the floor beam could result in damage to critical flight control cables and wire bundles that pass through the floor beam, and consequent loss of controllability of the airplane. Failure of the floor beam also could result in the failure of the adjacent fuselage frames and skin, and consequent rapid decompression of the airplane.

In the preamble to AD 98–09–17, we specify that the actions required by that AD are considered “interim action” and that the manufacturer was developing a preventive modification to address the unsafe condition. We indicated that we might consider further rulemaking action once the modification was developed, approved, and available. Though the manufacturer now has developed such a modification, we have determined that it does not provide an adequate level of safety, as explained below under the heading “Differences Between Proposed AD and Service Bulletins.” However, considering the nature of the identified unsafe condition, we have determined that it is necessary to proceed with rulemaking action at this time to ensure the continued operating safety of the affected airplane fleet. This proposed AD follows from that determination.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

We have reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747–53A2429, dated March 22, 2001. That