

To find and fix fatigue cracking of certain upper and lower skin panels of the fuselage, which could result in sudden fracture and failure of the skin panels and consequent rapid decompression of the airplane, accomplish the following:

#### External Detailed and Eddy Current Inspections

(a) For Groups 1 through 6 and Group 8 airplanes: Before the accumulation of 35,000 total flight cycles, or within 4,500 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, whichever is later, do external detailed and eddy current inspections of the crown area skin panels of the fuselage for cracking, per Part 1 and Figure 1 of the Work Instructions of Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1210, Revision 1, including Appendix A and excluding Evaluation Form, dated October 25, 2001. Repeat the inspections at least every 4,500 flight cycles until paragraph (c) or (d)(1)(ii) of this AD has been done, as applicable. Although paragraph 1.D. of the service bulletin references a reporting requirement, such reporting is not required by this AD.

**Note 2:** For the purposes of this AD, a detailed inspection is defined as: "An intensive visual examination of a specific structural area, system, installation, or assembly to detect damage, failure, or irregularity. Available lighting is normally supplemented with a direct source of good lighting at intensity deemed appropriate by the inspector. Inspection aids such as mirror, magnifying lenses, etc., may be used. Surface cleaning and elaborate access procedures may be required."

(b) For all airplanes: Before the accumulation of 40,000 total flight cycles, or within 4,500 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, whichever is later, do an external detailed inspection of the lower lobe area and section 41 of the fuselage for cracking, per Part 2 and Figure 2 of the Work Instructions of Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1210, Revision 1, including Appendix A and excluding Evaluation Form, dated October 25, 2001. Repeat the inspection at least every 9,000 flight cycles until paragraph (d)(2) of this AD has been done, as applicable.

#### Preventive Modification

(c) For Groups 3, 5, 6, and 8 airplanes: If no cracking is found during any inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD, doing the preventive modification of the chem-milled pockets in the upper skin as specified in Part 5 of the Work Instructions of Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1210, Revision 1, including Appendix A and excluding Evaluation Form, dated October 25, 2001, ends the repetitive inspections for the modified area only.

#### Corrective Actions

(d) If any cracking is found during any inspection required by paragraph (a) or (b) of this AD, before further flight, do the actions specified in paragraphs (d)(1) and (d)(2) of this AD, as applicable, per the Work Instructions of Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1210, Revision 1, including Appendix A and excluding Evaluation Form,

dated October 25, 2001. Where the service bulletin specifies to contact Boeing for repair instructions, before further flight, repair per a method approved by the Manager, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), FAA; or per data meeting the type certification basis of the airplane approved by a Boeing Company Designated Engineering Representative (DER) who has been authorized by the Manager, Seattle ACO, to make such findings. For a repair method to be approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO, as required by this paragraph, the approval letter must specifically reference this AD.

(1) For cracking of the crown area, do the repair specified in either paragraph (d)(1)(i) or (d)(1)(ii) of this AD. Installation of the lap joint repair specified in paragraph (g) of AD 2002-07-08, amendment 39-12702, is considered acceptable for compliance with the corresponding action specified in this paragraph for the lap joint areas only.

(i) Do a time-limited repair per Part 4 of the Work Instructions of the service bulletin, then do the actions required by paragraph (e) of this AD at the times specified in that paragraph.

(ii) Do a permanent repair per Part 3 of the Work Instructions of the service bulletin. Installation of a permanent repair ends the repetitive inspections required by paragraph (a) of this AD for the repaired area only.

(2) For cracking of the lower lobe area and Section 41, repair per Part 2 of the Work Instructions of the service bulletin. Accomplishment of this repair ends the repetitive inspections required by paragraph (b) of this AD for the repaired area only.

#### Follow-on and Corrective Actions

(e) If a time-limited repair is done, as specified in paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this AD: Do the actions specified in paragraphs (e)(1), (e)(2), and (e)(3) of this AD, at the times specified, per the Work Instructions of Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1210, Revision 1, including Appendix A and excluding Evaluation Form, dated October 25, 2001.

(1) Within 3,000 flight cycles after doing the repair: Do a general visual inspection of the repaired area for loose fasteners per Part 4 of the Work Instructions of the service bulletin. If any loose fastener is found, before further flight, replace with a new fastener per the service bulletin. Then repeat the inspection at least every 3,000 flight cycles until permanent rivets are installed in the repaired area, which ends the repetitive inspections for this paragraph.

(2) Within 4,000 flight cycles after doing the repair: Do an internal eddy current inspection of the skin, tear straps, and lap joint in each adjacent bay of the repaired area for cracking, per Part 4 of the Work Instructions of the service bulletin. If any cracking is found, before further flight, repair per a method approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO, or per data meeting the type certification basis of the airplane approved by a Boeing Company DER who has been authorized by the FAA to make such findings. For a repair method to be approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO, as required by this paragraph, the approval letter must specifically reference this AD.

(3) Within 10,000 flight cycles after doing the repair: Make the repair permanent per Part 4 and Figure 20 of the Work Instructions of the service bulletin, which ends the repetitive inspections for the repaired area only.

#### Credit for Actions Done per Previous Service Bulletin

(f) Inspections, repairs, and preventive modifications done before the effective date of this AD per Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1210, dated December 14, 2000, are acceptable for compliance with the corresponding actions required by this AD.

#### Alternative Methods of Compliance

(g) 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, Seattle ACO. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Seattle ACO.

**Note 3:** Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Seattle ACO.

#### Special Flight Permit

(h) Special flight permits may be issued in accordance with sections 21.197 and 21.199 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.197 and 21.199) to operate the airplane to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on June 11, 2003.

**Ali Bahrami,**

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Aviation Administration

#### 14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2000-NM-169-AD]

**RIN 2120-AA64**

#### Airworthiness Directives; McDonnell Douglas Model DC-9-81 (MD-81), DC-9-82 (MD-82), DC-9-83 (MD-83), DC-9-87 (MD-87), and Model MD-88 Airplanes

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

**ACTION:** Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

**SUMMARY:** This document proposes the adoption of a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to certain McDonnell Douglas airplanes. This proposal would require reversing the ground stud installation of the main