

comments on this proposed rule on or before March 21, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments to FAA, Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2002-CE-44-AD, 901 Locust, Room 506, Kansas City, Missouri 64106. You may view any comments at this location between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also send comments electronically to the following address: 9-ACE-7-Docket@faa.gov. Comments sent electronically must contain "Docket No. 2002-CE-44-AD" in the subject line. If you send comments electronically as attached electronic files, the files must be formatted in Microsoft Word 97 for Windows or ASCII text.

You may get service information that applies to this proposed AD from The New Piper Aircraft, Inc., Customer Services, 2926 Piper Drive, Vero Beach, Florida 32960; telephone: (561) 567-4361; facsimile: (772) 978-6573. You may also view this information at the Rules Docket at the address above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Hassan Amini, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Atlanta Aircraft Certification Office, One Crown Center, 1895 Phoenix Boulevard, Suite 450, Atlanta, Georgia 30349; telephone: (770) 703-6080; facsimile: (770) 703-6097.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

How Do I Comment On This Proposed AD?

The FAA invites comments on this proposed rule. You may submit whatever written data, views, or arguments you choose. You need to include the rule's docket number and submit your comments to the address specified under the caption **ADDRESSES**. We will consider all comments received on or before the closing date. We may amend this proposed rule in light of comments received. Factual information that supports your ideas and suggestions is extremely helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of this proposed AD action and determining whether we need to take additional rulemaking action.

Are There Any Specific Portions of This Proposed AD I Should Pay Attention to?

The FAA specifically invites comments on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of this proposed rule that might suggest a need to modify the rule. You may view all comments we receive before and after the closing date of the rule in the Rules Docket. We will file a report in the Rules Docket that summarizes each contact we have with the public that concerns the substantive parts of this proposed AD.

How Can I Be Sure FAA Receives My Comment?

If you want FAA to acknowledge the receipt of your mailed comments, you must include a self-addressed, stamped postcard. On the postcard, write "Comments to Docket No. 2002-CE-44-AD." We will date stamp and mail the postcard back to you.

Discussion

What Events Have Caused This Proposed AD?

A review of FAA's service difficulty report (SDR) database shows several incidents of cracks and corrosion in the flap control torque tube on Piper PA-23 series airplanes. One incident of a broken flap control torque tube resulted in a split flap condition during approach.

What Are the Consequences If the Condition Is Not Corrected?

Cracked or corroded flap torque tubes, if not detected and corrected, could result in damage to the flap control torque tube and failure of the flap operating system. If such failure occurred during landing or takeoff, then a split flap condition could occur with potential loss of control of the airplane.

Is There Service Information That Applies to This Subject?

Piper has issued Mandatory Service Bulletin No. 1051B, dated November 5, 2002.

What Are the Provisions of This Service Information?

The service bulletin includes procedures for:

- Inspecting the flap control torque tube for cracks, corrosion, wear, or

elongation of the attachment bolt holes; and

- Installing a part number (P/N 17634-002 flap control torque tube; or a P/N 104622-002 or 104622-004 flap control torque tube assembly.

The FAA's Determination and an Explanation of the Provisions of This Proposed AD

What Has FAA Decided?

After examining the circumstances and reviewing all available information related to the incidents described above, we have determined that:

- The unsafe condition referenced in this document exists or could develop on other Models PA-23, PA-23-160, PA-23-235, PA-23-250, and PA-E23-250 airplanes of the same type design that do not incorporate a certain flap control torque tube or torque tube assembly;
- The actions specified in the previously-referenced service information should be accomplished on the affected airplanes; and
- AD action should be taken in order to correct this unsafe condition.

What Would This Proposed AD Require?

This proposed AD would require you to repetitively inspect the flap control torque tube for cracks, corrosion, wear, or elongation of the attachment bolt holes; and would require you to replace any damaged flap control torque tube with either an improved design flap control torque tube or flap control torque tube assembly. The repetitive inspections would no longer be necessary when the improved design flap control torque tube or flap control torque tube assembly is installed.

Cost Impact

How Many Airplanes Would This Proposed AD Impact?

We estimate that this proposed AD affects 3,733 airplanes in the U.S. registry.

What Would Be the Cost Impact of This Proposed AD on Owners/Operators of the Affected Airplanes?

We estimate the following costs to accomplish each proposed inspection:

Labor cost	Parts cost	Total cost per airplane	Total cost on U.S. operators
8 workhours × \$60 per hour = \$480	None for inspection	\$480	\$1,791,840

We estimate the following costs to accomplish any necessary replacement that would be required based on the results of the proposed inspection. We have no way of determining the number of airplanes that may need such repair/replacement: