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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Aviation Administration

#### 14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2003–NM–101–AD; Amendment 39–13209; AD 2003–13–09]

RIN 2120–AA64

#### Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 747 Series Airplanes

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

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

**SUMMARY:** This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to certain Boeing Model 747 series airplanes. This action requires repetitive inspections for cracking of the upper skin of the outboard and center sections of the horizontal stabilizer and the rear spar structure, hinge fittings, terminal fittings, and splice plates; and repair if necessary. This action is necessary to find and fix such cracking, which could lead to reduced structural capability of the outboard and center sections of the horizontal stabilizer, and result in loss of controllability of the airplane. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

**DATES:** Effective July 15, 2003.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of July 15, 2003.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before August 29, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003–NM–101–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-iarcomment@faa.gov*. Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain “Docket No. 2003–NM–101–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 or 2000 or ASCII text.

The service information referenced in this AD may be obtained from Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, P.O. Box 3707, Seattle, Washington 98124–2207. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Tamara Anderson, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM–120S, FAA, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056; telephone (425) 917–6421; fax (425) 917–6590.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Related AD

This AD is related to AD 2002–06–02, amendment 39–12678 (67 FR 12464, March 19, 2002). Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747–55A2050, dated February 28, 2002, was referenced in that AD as the applicable source of service information for accomplishment of the required actions. That AD is applicable to all Boeing Model 747 series airplanes and requires repetitive inspections for cracking of the upper skin of the horizontal stabilizer center section and the rear spar upper chord, and repair if necessary. That AD was prompted by a report that a 3.5-inch crack was found in the upper skin of the horizontal stabilizer center section on a Boeing Model 747SR series airplane. The actions specified by that AD are intended to find and fix cracking of the upper skin of the horizontal stabilizer center section and the rear spar upper chord, which could lead to reduced structural capability of the horizontal stabilizer center section, and result in loss of controllability of the airplane.

#### Since the Issuance of That AD

The FAA has received 22 reports from two operators of cracking found on six Model 747 series airplanes with between 20,800 and 37,000 total flight cycles, and between 41,700 and 115,700 total flight hours. Of the 22 reports of cracking received, the cracking specified in 20 of the reports was in an area not covered by the Zone A inspections required by AD 2002–06–02. One operator reported finding two fractured and three cracked Maraging steel fasteners on an airplane with approximately 18,700 total flight cycles and 87,300 total flight hours. Such cracking, if not fixed, could lead to reduced structural capability of the outboard and center sections of the horizontal stabilizer, which could result in loss of controllability of the airplane.

#### Explanation of Relevant Service Information

We have reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747–55A2050, Revision 1, dated May 1, 2003, which describes procedures for repetitive inspections for cracking of the upper skin of the outboard and center sections of the horizontal stabilizer and the rear spar structure, hinge fittings, terminal fittings, and splice plates; and repair if necessary. The areas and inspection types are as follows:

- Zone A Inspections (inspections required by AD 2002–06–02): Part 1—Detailed inspections for cracking in the upper skin of the center section and rear spar upper chord. Part 2—High frequency eddy current (HFEC) inspections for cracking of the upper skin of the center section and rear spar upper chord. If no cracking is found, the service bulletin specifies either repeating the detailed inspection or the doing the Zone A—Part 2 inspection. If cracking is found, the service bulletin specifies doing the Zone B—Part 4 inspection and repairing any cracking. Following that inspection and repair, the service bulletin specifies either repeating the Zone A—Part 1 detailed inspection or doing the Zone A—Part 2 HFEC inspection.

- Zone B Inspections (inspections required by this AD):

Part 3—Nondestructive test (NDT) inspections for Groups 1, 2, and 3 airplanes: Includes an ultrasonic inspection for cracking of the outboard and center sections, rear spar upper