

chords under the hinge fitting halves, upper skins under the splice plates, and the rear spar webs behind the terminal fittings; a HFEC inspection for cracking in the terminal fittings around the fasteners; a low frequency eddy current inspection for cracking in the splice plates around the fasteners; a surface HFEC inspection for cracking in the rear spar upper chords in the radius area above the terminal fittings and the lower surface of the horizontal flange; and a HFEC inspection for cracking in the rear spar webs in the exposed area above the terminal fittings.

Part 4—Alternate open hole NDT inspection for Groups 1, 2, and 3 airplanes; recommended for Groups 4, 5, and 6 airplanes: Includes an open hole HFEC inspection for cracking of the splice plates, terminal fittings, hinge fitting halves, rear spar upper chords, rear spar webs, and upper skins; and a magnetic particle inspection or fluorescent penetrant inspection of the bolts for damage, if applicable. If no cracking or no damaged hole is found, the service bulletin specifies either repeating the Part 3 NDT inspections or doing the Part 4 open hole NDT inspection, as applicable. If cracking or a damaged hole is found, the service bulletin specifies repairing the cracking and the damaged hole and repeating the Part 3 NDT inspections or doing the Part 4 open hole NDT inspection, as applicable.

Accomplishment of the actions specified in the service bulletin is intended to adequately address the identified unsafe condition.

#### **Explanation of the Requirements of the Rule**

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other airplanes of the same type design, this AD is being issued to find and fix 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. Such cracking 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 AD requires accomplishment of the Zone B inspections for Groups 1, 2, and 3 airplanes as specified in Parts 3 and 4 of the service bulletin described previously, except as discussed in the "Differences" section below.

This AD does not supersede AD 2002-06-02; therefore, accomplishment of that AD is still required. Please note that as stated in the approval section of Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747-

55A2050, Revision 1, dated May 1, 2003, that bulletin has been approved as an alternative method of compliance to certain portions of AD 2002-06-02.

#### **Interim Action**

At this time the FAA is considering a separate rulemaking action to supersede this AD to address the procedures for repetitive inspections of Zone C to find additional cracking, and repair of any cracking found, as described in the service bulletin. That action would also mandate repetitive inspections of Zone B for Groups 4, 5, and 6 airplanes. Due to the urgency of the need to inspect the fleet and repair any cracking found, this AD will address only the sections in the service bulletin that pertain to inspections and repair of Zone B for Groups 1, 2, and 3 airplanes.

In addition to superseding this AD, that rulemaking action would also supersede AD 2002-06-02 to mandate long-term inspections of all affected zones specified in the referenced service bulletin for all 747 series airplanes. However, the planned compliance time for these actions is sufficiently long so that prior notice and time for public comment will be practicable.

#### **Differences Between This AD and the Service Bulletin**

The effectivity listing of the service bulletin identifies all Model 747 series airplanes, line number 1 and on, divided into 6 groups, as being subject to the actions described therein. However, only Model 747 series airplanes having line numbers 1 through 695 inclusive (Groups 1, 2, and 3 airplanes) are included in the applicability of this AD, as the required actions apply only to the Zone B inspections for those airplanes.

The service bulletin recommends accomplishing the initial Zone B inspections for Groups 1, 2, and 3 airplanes within 90 days (after the issue date of the service bulletin) for airplanes with 27,000 or more flight cycles or 117,000 or more flight hours. We have determined, however, that limiting the inspections to airplanes with 27,000 or more flight cycles or 117,000 or more flight hours would not address all affected airplanes, in light of the fact that the unsafe condition is likely to exist or develop on other Model 747 series airplanes. In developing an appropriate compliance time for all airplanes that are affected by this AD, the FAA considered not only the manufacturer's recommendation, but the degree of urgency associated with addressing the subject unsafe condition, the average utilization of the affected fleet, and the time necessary to perform

the required inspections. In light of all of these factors, we find that a compliance time of the later of the following times is warranted for initiating the required inspections: (1) Before the accumulation of 27,000 total flight cycles or 117,000 total flight hours, whichever is first; and (2) within 90 days after the effective date of this AD. We find that this compliance time represents an appropriate interval of time allowable for affected airplanes to continue to operate without compromising safety.

The service bulletin specifies that the manufacturer may be contacted for disposition of certain repair conditions; however, this AD requires the repair of those conditions to be accomplished per a method approved by the FAA, or per data meeting the type certification basis of the airplane approved by a Boeing Company Designated Engineering Representative who has been authorized by the Manager, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, to make such findings.

#### **Changes to 14 CFR part 39/Effect on the AD**

On July 10, 2002, the FAA issued a new version of 14 CFR part 39 (67 FR 47997, July 22, 2002), which governs the FAA's airworthiness directives system. The regulation now includes material that relates to altered products, special flight permits, and alternative methods of compliance. Because we have now included this material in part 39, we no longer need to include it in each individual AD; however, this AD identifies the office authorized to approve alternative methods of compliance.

#### **Determination of Rule's Effective Date**

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.

#### **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 shall identify the Rules Docket number and be submitted in triplicate to the address specified under the caption **ADDRESSES**. All communications received on or before