

DATES: The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) must receive any comments on this proposed rule on or before August 4, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments to FAA, Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003-CE-29-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. 2003-CE-29-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 Pilatus Aircraft Ltd., Customer Liaison Manager, CH-6371 Stans, Switzerland; telephone: +41 41 619 63 19; facsimile: +41 41 619 6224; or from Pilatus Business Aircraft Ltd., Product Support Department, 11755 Airport Way, Broomfield, Colorado 80021; telephone: (303) 465-9099; facsimile: (303) 465-6040. You may also view this information at the Rules Docket at the address above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Doug Rudolph, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Small Airplane Directorate, 901 Locust, Room 301, Kansas City, Missouri 64106; telephone: (816) 329-4059; facsimile: (816) 329-4090.

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 proposed 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. 2003-CE-29-AD." We will date stamp and mail the postcard back to you.

Discussion

What events have caused this proposed AD? The Federal Office for Civil Aviation (FOCA), which is the airworthiness authority for Switzerland, recently notified FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on certain Pilatus Model PC-7 airplanes. The FOCA reports that an operator of a similar aircraft type design, which uses identical dihedral fittings, reported a crack in one fitting. An inspection of the fleet revealed stress corrosion cracking in six aft dihedral fittings. Each cracked fitting was found on airplanes that had logged more than 3,000 hours time-in-service (TIS) or had been in service for 10 years or more.

What are the consequences if the condition is not corrected? Cracks in the forward and aft dihedral fittings could result in failure of the wing in certain maneuvers. Such failure could lead to loss of control of the airplane.

Is there service information that applies to this subject? Pilatus has issued Pilatus PC-7 Service Bulletin No. 57-006, Revision No. 3, dated January 15, 2003.

What are the provisions of this service information? The service bulletin includes procedures for:

- inspecting the forward and aft dihedral fittings for cracks; and
- modifying the aft dihedral fitting and spar-cap bolt holes.

What action did the FOCA take? The FOCA classified this service information as mandatory and issued Swiss AD Number HB 2003-196, dated May 12, 2003, in order to ensure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in Switzerland.

Was this in accordance with the bilateral airworthiness agreement? These airplane models are

manufactured in Switzerland and are type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of section 21.29 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.29) and the applicable bilateral airworthiness agreement.

Pursuant to this bilateral airworthiness agreement, the FOCA has kept FAA informed of the situation described above.

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

What has FAA decided? The FAA has examined the findings of the FOCA; reviewed all available information, including the service information referenced above; and determined that:

- the unsafe condition referenced in this document exists or could develop on other Pilatus Model PC-7 airplanes of the same type design that are on the U.S. registry;
 - 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:
- inspect the forward and aft dihedral fittings for cracks;
 - replace any cracked fittings found; and
 - modify the aft dihedral fittings and spar-cap bolt holes.

How does the revision to 14 CFR part 39 affect this proposed AD? On July 10, 2002, FAA published a new version of 14 CFR part 39 (67 FR 47997, July 22, 2002), which governs FAA's AD system. This regulation now includes material that relates to special flight permits, alternative methods of compliance, and altered products. This material previously was included in each individual AD. Since this material is included in 14 CFR part 39, we will not include it in future AD actions.

Cost Impact

How many airplanes would this proposed AD impact? We estimate that this proposed AD affects 10 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 the proposed actions of this AD: