

**Note 1:** For the purposes of this AD, a general visual inspection is defined as: "A visual examination of an interior or exterior area, installation, or assembly to detect obvious damage, failure, or irregularity. This level of inspection is made from within touching distance unless otherwise specified. A mirror may be necessary to enhance visual access to all exposed surfaces in the inspection area. This level of inspection is made under normally available lighting conditions such as daylight, hangar lighting, flashlight, or droplight and may require removal or opening of access panels or doors. Stands, ladders, or platforms may be required to gain proximity to the area being checked."

(g) Actions accomplished before the effective date of this AD, per the Accomplishment Instructions of EMBRAER Alert Service Bulletin 145-36-A018, dated April 14, 2000; or EMBRAER Service Bulletin 145-36-0018, dated November 5, 2002; are considered acceptable for compliance with the actions specified in paragraph (f) of this AD.

#### Alternative Methods of Compliance

(h) In accordance with 14 CFR 39.19, the Manager, International Branch, ANM-116, FAA, is authorized to approve alternative methods of compliance for this AD.

**Note 2:** The subject of this AD is addressed in Brazilian airworthiness directive 2000-04-01R2, dated May 28, 2001.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on July 10, 2003.

Ali Bahrami,

*Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.*

[FR Doc. 03-17951 Filed 7-15-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-P

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Aviation Administration

#### 14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2003-SW-10-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

#### Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Model AS355E, F, F1, F2, and N Helicopters

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

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

**SUMMARY:** This document proposes superseding an existing airworthiness directive (AD) for the specified Eurocopter France (ECF) model helicopters. That AD currently requires certain checks of the magnetic chip detector plug (chip detector) and the main gearbox (MGB) oil-sight glass; certain inspections of the lubrication pump (pump), if necessary; replacing the MGB and the pump with an

airworthy MGB and pump, if necessary; and a different MGB or pump with any time-in-service (TIS) must meet the AD requirements before being installed.

This document proposes the same requirements but also proposes to correct the wording in the existing AD to state that the check of the chip detector is for sludge rather than metal particles. This proposal is prompted by the need to correct the wording to require that the check of the chip detector is for sludge rather than metal particles because the term "metal particles" is misleading. The actions specified by this AD are intended to detect sludge on the chip detector, to prevent failure of the MGB pump, seizure of the MGB, loss of drive to an engine and main rotor, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before September 15, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003-SW-10-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137. You may also send comments electronically to the Rules Docket at the following address: [9-asw-adcomments@faa.gov](mailto:9-asw-adcomments@faa.gov). Comments may be inspected at the Office of the Regional Counsel between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ed Cuevas, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Safety Management Group, Fort Worth, Texas 76193-0111, telephone (817) 222-5355, fax (817) 222-5961.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Comments Invited

Interested persons are invited to participate in the making of the proposed rule by submitting such written data, views, or arguments as they may desire. Communications should identify the Rules Docket number and be submitted in triplicate to the address specified above. All communications received on or before the closing date for comments will be considered before taking action on the proposed rule. The proposals contained in this document may be changed in light of the comments received.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the proposed rule. All comments submitted will be available, both before and after the closing date for comments, in the Rules Docket for examination by interested persons. A report

summarizing each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this proposal will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their mailed comments submitted in response to this proposal must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket No. 2003-SW-10-AD." The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

#### Discussion

On October 17, 2002, the FAA issued Emergency AD 2002-21-51. That Emergency AD was published in the **Federal Register** as a final rule; request for comments on December 18, 2002 (67 FR 77401). That AD requires checking the chip detector for metal particles and the MGB oil-sight glass for dark oil; taking an oil sample if dark oil is observed; further inspection of the pump, if necessary; and replacing the MGB and the pump with an airworthy MGB and pump, if necessary. Also, that AD requires that a different MGB or pump with any TIS must meet the requirements of the AD before being installed. That AD was prompted by four reports of malfunction of the MGB pump. The bearings of the driven pinion inside the pump can deteriorate resulting in pump failure and loss of oil pressure in the MGB. The requirements of that AD are intended to prevent seizure of the MGB, loss of drive to an engine and main rotor, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

Since issuing that AD, the FAA has learned that the meaning of the source information in the DGAC AD was inadvertently changed. The check of the chip detector should be for "sludge" rather than "metal particles" as required in the existing AD. The presence of metal particles on the chip detector is already addressed in the maintenance manuals. Operators should continue to follow the maintenance manual instructions when metal particles are present on the chip detector. Therefore, the proposed AD would supersede AD 2002-21-51 to replace the words "metal particles" with the word "sludge" and to define "sludge." The term "sludge" is used to describe a deposit on the chip detector. This deposit may have both metallic and nonmetallic properties. It is typically dark in color and in the form of a film or paste, as compared to metal chips or particles normally found on the chip detector.

An owner/operator (pilot) may perform the visual checks for sludge on the chip detector and for dark oil in the