

International Branch, ANM-116, Transport Airplane Directorate, FAA. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, International Branch, ANM-116.

**Note 3:** Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the International Branch, ANM-116.

#### Special Flight Permits

(g) Special flight permits may be issued in accordance with sections §§ 21.197 and 21.199 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.197 and 21.199) to operate the airplane to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

**Note 4:** The subject of this AD is addressed in Swedish airworthiness directive 1-168, dated October 1, 2001.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on July 15, 2003.

**Ali Bahrami,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Aviation Administration

#### 14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2002-NM-150-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

#### Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 737-100, -200, and -200C Series Airplanes

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

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

**SUMMARY:** This document proposes the superseding of an existing airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to certain Boeing Model 737-100, -200, and -200C series airplanes, that currently requires repetitive inspections to detect discrepancies in the upper and lower skins of the fuselage lap joint, and repair if necessary. This action would add new inspections, reduce the repetitive inspection intervals for certain airplanes, and mandate a terminating modification. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to detect and correct discrepancies in the upper and lower skins of the fuselage lap joint and circumferential joint, which could result in sudden fracture and failure of a lap joint or circumferential joint and rapid decompression of the airplane fuselage.

**DATES:** Comments must be received by September 4, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2002-NM-150-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-nprmcomment@faa.gov](mailto:9-anm-nprmcomment@faa.gov). Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain "Docket No. 2002-NM-150-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 the proposed rule 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. **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Duong Tran, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120S, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 917-6452; fax (425) 917-6590.

#### 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 shall 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, specified above, will be considered before taking action on the proposed rule. The proposals contained in this action may be changed in light of the comments received.

Submit comments using the following format:

- Organize comments issue-by-issue. For example, discuss a request to change the compliance time and a request to change the service bulletin reference as two separate issues.
- For each issue, state what specific change to the proposed AD is being requested.
- Include justification (e.g., reasons or data) for each request.

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 comments submitted in response to this action must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket Number 2002-NM-150-AD." The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

#### Availability of NPRMs

Any person may obtain a copy of this NPRM by submitting a request to the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2002-NM-150-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

#### Discussion

On August 18, 2000, the FAA issued AD 2000-17-04, amendment 39-11878 (65 FR 51750, August 25, 2000), applicable to certain Boeing Model 737-100, -200, and -200C series airplanes, to require repetitive inspections to detect discrepancies in the upper and lower skins of the fuselage lap joint, and repair if necessary. That action was prompted by a report indicating in-flight rapid decompression of a Boeing Model 737 series airplane. The requirements of that AD are intended to detect and correct such discrepancies, which could result in sudden fracture and failure of a lap joint and rapid decompression of the airplane fuselage.

#### Actions Since Issuance of Previous Rule

In the preamble to AD 2000-17-04, we indicated that the actions required by that AD were considered "interim action" and that the manufacturer was developing a modification to address the unsafe condition. The manufacturer now has developed such a modification, and we have determined that further rulemaking action is indeed necessary; this proposed AD follows from that determination.

Additionally, we have determined that the inspections for cracking as specified in paragraph (a) of the existing AD do not provide the crack detection necessary to support the compliance time for the repetitive inspection intervals. Therefore, we are proposing to reduce the compliance time for the