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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2003-SW-33-AD; Amendment 39-13255; AD 2003-14-51]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; MD Helicopters, Inc., Model MD900 Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This document publishes in the **Federal Register** an amendment adopting Airworthiness Directive (AD) 2003-14-51, which was sent previously to all known U.S. owners and operators of the specified MD Helicopters, Inc. (MDHI) helicopters by individual letters. This AD requires checking and inspecting each main rotor blade retention bolt (bolt) and replacing the bolt with an airworthy bolt if necessary. The actions specified by this AD are intended to prevent failure of a bolt, loss of main rotor blade, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Effective August 25, 2003, to all persons except those persons to whom it was made immediately effective by Emergency AD 2003-14-51, issued on July 2, 2003, which contained the requirements of this amendment.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of August 25, 2003.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before October 7, 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-33-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.

The service information referenced in this AD may be obtained from MD

Helicopters Inc., Attn: Customer Support Division, 4555 E. McDowell Rd., Mail Stop M615-GO48, Mesa, Arizona 85215-9734, telephone 1-800-388-3378, fax 480-891-6782, or on the web at <http://www.mdhelicopters.com>. This information may be examined at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jon Mowery, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, Airframe Branch, 2960 Paramount Blvd., Lakewood, California 90712, telephone (562) 627-5322, fax (562) 627-5210.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On June 20, 2003, the FAA issued an Emergency AD (EAD) 2003-13-51 for the specified MDHI model helicopters that contained interim actions until certain investigations were complete. That EAD requires certain checks and inspections of bolt, part number (P/N) 900R3100001-103, replacing the bolt with an airworthy bolt if necessary. That action was prompted by two instances of failure of a bolt.

Since the issuance of that EAD, we have new information that indicates that the pilot check and torque inspection required by the EAD can be limited to certain bolts. We also determined that disassembly and a more detailed inspection of the condition of each bolt is necessary. On July 2, 2003, we superseded EAD 2003-13-51 by issuing EAD 2003-14-51, which requires certain checks and inspections of certain bolts and replacing any bolt with an airworthy bolt if necessary. The EAD also provides terminating action for the requirements of the EAD.

The FAA has reviewed MD Helicopters Service Bulletin SB900-092R1, dated June 30, 2003 (SB), which describes procedures for disassembling and inspecting the bolts.

Since the unsafe condition described is likely to exist or develop on other MDHI helicopters of the same type design, the FAA issued EAD 2003-14-51 to prevent failure of a bolt, loss of a main rotor blade, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter. The AD requires the following:

- Before further flight, remove, inspect, and reinstall each bolt, unless accomplished previously. If segments do not move freely or a crack is found, replace the bolt with an airworthy bolt before further flight.
- Thereafter, until the terminating action is accomplished, before each start

of the engines for each bolt with 400 or more hours TIS, do a visual check. A pilot may perform the visual check.

- If a bolt has shifted upward or if there is no gap between the thrust washer and retainer (the gap indicates that the O ring is intact), before further flight, inspect the bolt.

- At specified intervals, until you accomplish the terminating action, for bolts with 400 or more hours TIS, do a cam lever force inspection on each bolt, without removing the bolt.

- Within 30 days, for bolts with 400 or more hours TIS, disassemble, inspect, and reinstall each airworthy bolt. If a crack, fretting, or corrosion is found, replace the bolt with an airworthy bolt before further flight.

- Before accumulating 400 hours TIS, for each bolt with less than 400 hours TIS, disassemble, inspect, and reinstall each airworthy bolt. If a crack, fretting, or corrosion is found, replace the bolt with an airworthy bolt before further flight.

Doing the required disassembly and inspections of each bolt, P/N 900R3100001-103, constitutes terminating action for the requirements of this AD. The actions must be accomplished in accordance with the service bulletin described previously.

An owner/operator (pilot), holding at least a private pilot certificate, may perform the visual checks required by paragraph (b) of this AD and must enter compliance into the aircraft maintenance records in accordance with 14 CFR sections 43.11 and 91.417(a)(2)(v)). A pilot may perform this check because it is a visual check for a gap or movement of the bolt and can be performed equally well by a pilot or a mechanic.

The short compliance time involved is required because the previously described critical unsafe condition can adversely affect the controllability or structural integrity of the helicopter. Therefore, removing, inspecting, and reinstalling each bolt at the specified time intervals, and replacing any unairworthy bolt with an airworthy bolt is required before further flight and this AD must be issued immediately.

Since it was found that immediate corrective action was required, notice and opportunity for prior public comment thereon were impracticable and contrary to the public interest, and good cause existed to make the AD effective immediately by individual letters issued on July 2, 2003, to all known U.S. owners and operators of MDHI Model MD900 helicopters. These conditions still exist, and the AD is hereby published in the **Federal**