

potentially striking the airplane, which could result in damage to the surrounding structure and potential personal injury. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

DATES: Comments must be received by February 20, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2002-NM-143-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*. Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain "Docket No. 2002-NM-143-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 for Windows 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: Suzanne Masterson, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120S, FAA, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 227-2772; fax (425) 227-1181.

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-143-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-143-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

The FAA has received a report indicating that, during a routine maintenance inspection, fractured lugs were found on both hinge fittings of the outboard hinge assembly mounted to the inboard main flap on a Boeing Model 767-300 series airplane. That airplane had accumulated 9,598 total flight hours and 5,393 total flight cycles. An optional "tool runout" procedure, which allows the part to be machined thicker and reinforces the area, had not been performed on the fitting assembly that was damaged. No cracks or fractures have been reported on fittings on which the optional tool runout procedure had been performed.

Cracked or fractured hinge fittings, if not corrected, could result in the inboard aft flap separating from the wing and potentially striking the airplane, and consequent damage to the surrounding structure and potential personal injury.

The hinge fittings on Model 767-400ER series airplanes are similar in design to those on Model 767-200, -300, and -300F series airplanes. Although the Model 767-400ER fittings are wider and thicker, this area is subject to higher fatigue loads on Model

767-400ER series airplanes. As a result, those fittings could be susceptible to early fatigue cracking or fractures. Therefore, Model 767-400ER series airplanes are also subject to the unsafe condition identified in this proposed AD.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Service Bulletin 767-57A0076, Revision 1, dated March 29, 2001, including Evaluation Form (for Model 767-200, -300, and 300F series airplanes); and Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 767-57A0079, dated June 20, 2002 (for Model 767-400ER series airplanes). (Although both service bulletins contain evaluation forms, only Service Bulletin 767-57A0076 states that the evaluation form is "attached." This proposed AD would not require that any evaluation form be completed and submitted.) The service bulletins describe procedures for a detailed inspection to detect cracks and fractures of the outboard hinge fitting assemblies on the trailing edge of the inboard main flap. Alternatively, the service bulletins provide procedures for performing a combination of a detailed inspection and an eddy current inspection to detect cracks and fractures of the same area. Boeing Service Bulletin 767-57A0076 (for Model 767-200, -300, and -300F series airplanes) also describes procedures for determining whether a tool runout procedure has been done in the area, which would eliminate the need for the terminating action and further inspection, provided no cracks or fractures are found. Follow-on and corrective actions include repetitive inspections and a "Terminating Action" that involves replacing the outboard hinge fittings of the trailing edge of the inboard main flap with new fittings. Accomplishment of the detailed and eddy current inspections would extend the interval for the next inspection (if necessary) beyond the interval for the detailed inspection alone. Accomplishment of the "Terminating Action" would eliminate the need for repetitive inspections. Accomplishment of the actions specified in the service bulletins is intended to adequately address the identified unsafe condition.

Explanation of Requirements of Proposed Rule

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other products of this same type design, this proposed AD would require accomplishment of the actions specified in the service bulletins