

the center stowage bins to measure the exposed thread, and installation of a threaded sleeve if necessary.

- Replacement of the vertical tie rods that support the center stowage bins with new improved tie rods (including replacing the existing tie rod with a new improved tie rod, torquing the jam nuts, and inspecting through the witness hole to make sure tie rod threads are visible).

- Replacement of the vertical tie rods that support electrical racks E9, E11, and E13 (including replacing the existing tie rod with a new improved tie rod, replacing an existing tie rod clamp with a new improved tie rod clamp, inspecting certain electrical racks for "free play," adjusting jam nuts if necessary, and inspecting through the witness hole to make sure tie rod threads are visible); as applicable.

- Installation of placards showing weight limits for electrical racks E9, E11, E13, and E15; as applicable.

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, the proposed AD would require accomplishment of the applicable actions specified in the service bulletin described previously, except as discussed below under the heading "Differences Between Proposed Rule and Service Bulletin." The proposed AD would also require a one-time records review and inspection to verify that the weight of equipment currently installed in certain electrical racks meets specified weight limits. This records review and inspection would involve determining what extra equipment has been installed in the subject racks of the airplane, performing a detailed inspection to determine that the subject equipment is installed on the airplane, calculating the total weight of the installed equipment, and comparing that total to the weight limit specified on the placard. If the weight of the equipment exceeds the limit specified on the placard, equipment must be removed from the rack to meet the requirement.

In developing an appropriate compliance time for this action, we considered not only the degree of urgency associated with addressing the subject unsafe condition, but the normal maintenance schedules for the majority of affected operators. In consideration of these factors, we have determined that 5 years represents an appropriate interval of time allowable wherein the proposed actions can be accomplished during scheduled maintenance intervals for the majority of affected operators.

We find that this will ensure an acceptable level of safety.

Clarification of Inspection Types

The service bulletin refers to an inspection of the clevis end of the vertical support tie rod to determine whether a threaded sleeve is required. We find that, since the inspection involves measuring the length of the exposed thread, the procedures for this inspection constitute a detailed inspection. This type of inspection is defined in Note 1 of this proposed AD.

As part of the procedures for replacing the vertical support tie rods, the service bulletin specifies to inspect through the witness hole to ensure that tie rod threads are visible. We find that this inspection constitutes a general visual inspection. This type of inspection is defined in Note 2 of the proposed AD.

Differences Between Proposed AD and Service Bulletin

Operators should note that, although the service bulletin specifies that the manufacturer may be contacted for disposition of certain conditions, this proposal would require the disposition of those conditions per a method approved by the FAA.

Operators also should note that, as explained previously, this proposed AD would require a one-time records review and an inspection that are not included in the service bulletin. We find that these additional actions are necessary to ensure that the weight of equipment currently installed in certain electrical racks is within the limits specified in the placards to be installed per the service bulletin referenced in this proposed AD.

Changes to 14 CFR Part 39/Effect on the Proposed AD

On July 10, 2002, the FAA issued a new version of 14 CFR part 39 (67 FR 47997, July 22, 2002), which governs the FAA's airworthiness directives system. The regulation now includes material that relates to altered products, special flight permits, and alternative methods of compliance (AMOCs). Because we have now included this material in part 39, only the office authorized to approve AMOCs is identified in each individual AD.

Change to Labor Rate Estimate

We have reviewed the figures we have used over the past several years to calculate AD costs to operators. To account for various inflationary costs in the airline industry, we find it necessary to increase the labor rate used in these calculations from \$60 per work hour to

\$65 per work hour. The cost impact information, below, reflects this increase in the specified hourly labor rate.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 282 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 84 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD.

For all airplanes: The records check and inspection to determine the weight currently installed in electrical rack E7 would take approximately 1 work hour per airplane to accomplish, at an average labor rate of \$65 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of this proposed records check and inspection on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$5,460, or \$65 per airplane.

For all airplanes: It would take approximately 1 work hour to accomplish the proposed installation of a placard specifying weight limits for electrical rack E7, at an average labor rate of \$65 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately \$29. Based on these figures, the cost impact of this proposed placard installation on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$7,896, or \$94 per electrical rack.

For airplanes subject to the records check and inspection to determine the weight currently installed in electrical rack E9, E11, E13, or E15: It would take approximately 1 work hour per electrical rack to accomplish, at an average labor rate of \$65 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of this proposed records check and inspection is estimated to be as much as \$260 per airplane.

For airplanes subject to the installation of a placard specifying weight limits for electrical rack E9, E11, E13, or E15: It would take approximately 1 work hour per electrical rack to accomplish, at an average labor rate of \$65 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately \$29 per electrical rack. Based on these figures, the cost impact of this proposed installation is estimated to be as much as \$376 per airplane.

For airplanes subject to the inspection of the clevis end of the vertical support tie rod for the center stowage bin to measure the exposed thread: It would take as much as 3 work hours per airplane (0.25 work hour per tie rod, with up to 12 subject tie rods per airplane) at an average labor rate of \$65 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of this proposed inspection is estimated to be as much as \$195 per airplane.