

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-97-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-97-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

On December 23, 1999, the FAA issued AD 99-27-07, amendment 39-11488 (65 FR 213, January 4, 2000), applicable to all Airbus Model A300 B4-600R and A300 F4-600R series airplanes, to require a one-time visual inspection for damage of the center tank fuel pumps and fuel pump canisters, and replacement of damaged fuel pumps and fuel pump canisters with new or serviceable parts. That action also requires repetitive visual inspections of the fuel pumps and repetitive eddy current inspections of the fuel pump canisters, and replacement of damaged fuel pumps and fuel pump canisters with new or serviceable parts. That action also reduces the applicability to include only those airplanes that have a trim tank system installed. That action was prompted by issuance of mandatory continuing airworthiness information by a foreign civil airworthiness authority. The requirements of that AD are intended to detect damage to the fuel pump and fuel pump canister, which could result in loss of flame trap capability and could provide a fuel ignition source in the center fuel tank.

Actions Since Issuance of Previous Rule

Since the issuance of AD 99-27-07, the Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, has issued French airworthiness directive 2002-132(B) dated March 20, 2002. The

French airworthiness directive continues to require repetitive inspections for damage of the center tank fuel pumps and fuel pump canisters and replacement of any damaged parts, and mandates modification of the canisters of the center tank fuel pumps, which would terminate the repetitive inspections required by AD 99-27-07.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

Airbus has issued Service Bulletin A300-28-6069, Revision 01, dated May 28, 2002, which describes procedures for modification of the canisters of the center tank fuel pumps. The modification includes drilling holes on the doubler for the canister locating pins; installing the locating pins; preparing the fastener holes for electrical bonding; and installing new, improved canisters and canister bonding leads. The service bulletin also describes procedures for an operational test of the center tank fuel pumps after accomplishment of the modification.

Airbus also has issued Service Bulletin A300-28-6061, Revision 04, dated August 1, 2002. The original issue of the service bulletin was referenced in the existing AD for accomplishment of certain inspections and corrective action. Airbus also previously issued Revision 01, dated May 31, 1999; Revision 02, dated October 29, 1999; and Revision 03, dated September 4, 2001. None of these revisions contain substantial changes from the original issue.

The DGAC classified these service bulletins as mandatory and issued French airworthiness directive 2002-132(B), dated March 20, 2002, to ensure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in France.

FAA's Conclusions

These airplane models are manufactured in France and are type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of section 21.29 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.29) and the applicable bilateral airworthiness agreement. Pursuant to this bilateral airworthiness agreement, the DGAC has kept us informed of the situation described above. We have examined the findings of the DGAC, reviewed all available information, and determined that AD action is necessary for products of this type design that are certificated for operation in the United States.

Explanation of Requirements of Proposed Rule

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other airplanes of the same type design registered in the United States, the proposed AD would supersede AD 99-27-07 to continue to require a one-time visual inspection for damage of the center tank fuel pumps and fuel pump canisters, and replacement of damaged fuel pumps and fuel pump canisters with new or serviceable parts. The proposed AD also would continue to require repetitive visual inspections for damage of the fuel pumps and repetitive eddy current inspections of the fuel pump canisters, and replacement of damaged fuel pumps and fuel pump canisters with new or serviceable parts. This new action would mandate modification of the canisters of the center tank fuel pumps, which would terminate the repetitive inspections required by the existing AD. The actions would be required to be accomplished in accordance with the service bulletins described previously.

Changes to 14 CFR Part 39/Effect on the AD

On July 10, 2002, we 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 84 airplanes of U.S. registry that would be affected by this proposed AD.

The inspections that are required by AD 99-27-07 take approximately 2 work hours per airplane to accomplish, at an average labor rate of \$65 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the currently required actions