

Note: The subject of this AD is addressed in Australian AD No. X-TS/3, dated December 24, 1999.

(g) *When does this amendment become effective?* This amendment becomes effective on November 3, 2003.

Issued in Kansas City, Missouri, on September 10, 2003.

Frank P. Paskiewicz,

Acting Manager, Small Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2003-NM-137-AD; Amendment 39-13304; AD 2003-19-02]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 777 Series Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to certain Boeing Model 777 series airplanes. This action requires inspections of the outboard leading edge slats on the wings for installation of seal assemblies with undersized seal inserts and missing or gapped inserts, and follow-on and corrective actions if necessary. This action also provides for an optional replacement of the seal assembly in lieu of the inspections. This action is necessary to find and fix such discrepancies, which could result in cracking of the slats, subsequent separation of the cove skin, structural damage or loss of the trailing edge wedge, and consequent reduced controllability of the airplane. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

DATES: Effective October 8, 2003.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of October 8, 2003.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before November 24, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003-NM-137-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-iarcomment@faa.gov. Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain "Docket No. 2003-NM-137-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 this AD 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; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gary Oltman, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120S, FAA, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 917-6443; fax (425) 917-6590.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Related AD

This AD is related to AD 2002-11-06, amendment 39-12767 (67 FR 38587, June 5, 2002), applicable to certain Boeing Model 777 series airplanes. Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 777-57A0034, Revision 2, dated November 19, 1998; Revision 3, dated May 4, 2000; Revision 4, dated July 20, 2000; and Revision 5, dated January 25, 2001; were referenced as the appropriate sources of service information for accomplishment of the required actions. That AD supersedes AD 2000-19-08, amendment 39-11909 (65 FR 57282, September 22, 2000), to continue to require repetitive detailed visual inspections to detect cracking of the coveskin on the outboard leading edge slats, and corrective actions, if necessary. AD 2002-11-06 also continues to provide for an optional modification that significantly increases the repetitive inspection interval, and expands the applicability of AD 2000-19-08 by mandating the currently required inspections, and corrective actions, if necessary, for additional airplanes. Also, for airplanes on which the optional modification has been accomplished, AD 2002-11-06 requires a new one-time inspection for undersized (incorrect diameter) seal inserts installed in the spanwise bulb

seals on certain slats, and replacement of seal assemblies with new assemblies if necessary.

Since the Issuance of That AD

Since the issuance of AD 2002-11-06, the FAA has received information from the manufacturer indicating that Group 4 airplanes may have seal assemblies on the outboard leading edge slats on the wings that were installed during production with undersized (incorrect diameter) inserts. In addition, those inserts may have receded into the ends of the seal assemblies.

We also have received reports of the installation of seal assemblies with missing and gapped inserts. These seal assemblies are installed on Model 777 series airplanes on which the seal insert installation was done per Revision 3, 4, 5, or 6 of the referenced service bulletin, and on which the seal inserts were installed during production. Investigation revealed that, during installation, the inserts were stretched and did not return to the original shape before being trimmed and bonded into place. Subsequently, the insert recedes into the ends of the seal assembly, and can become unbonded and detach from the seal assembly. Additionally, when the seal is stretched during installation, the insert can separate at a location along its length which allows the seal to recede from the center of the seal assembly. Such conditions, if not found and fixed, could result in cracking of the slats, subsequent separation of the cove skin, structural damage or loss of the trailing edge wedge, and consequent reduced controllability of the airplane.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

We have reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 777-57A0034, Revision 7, dated May 22, 2003, which describes procedures for inspections of the outboard leading edge slats on the wings for installation of seal assemblies with undersized (incorrect diameter) seal inserts and missing or gapped inserts, and follow-on and corrective actions if necessary. The applicable inspections and follow-on and corrective actions are specified in Part 5 and Part 6 of the Work Instructions of the service bulletin, described below:

Part 5—Seal Insert Diameter Inspection and Seal Replacement: Describes procedures for airplanes on which the seal insert installation has been done per Part 4 of the service bulletin. (Part 5 was added to Revision 6 of the referenced service bulletin for Groups 1 and 2 airplanes that had done Part 4 of the service bulletin referenced