

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Aviation Administration****14 CFR Part 39**

[Docket No. 2001–NM–183–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; McDonnell Douglas DC–8–11, DC–8–12, DC–8–21, DC–8–31, DC–8–32, DC–8–33, DC–8–41, DC–8–42, and DC–8–43 Airplanes; DC–8–50 Series Airplanes; DC–8F–54 and DC–8F–55 Airplanes; DC–8–60 Series Airplanes; DC–8–60F Series Airplanes; DC–8–70 Series Airplanes; and DC–8–70F Series Airplanes; All with Flat Aft Pressure Bulkheads

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes the adoption of a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to certain McDonnell Douglas Model DC–8 airplanes. This proposal would require a one-time inspection of the aft fuselage skin panel at the longeron 28 skin splice for cracks; repair of any cracks detected; and reporting of the findings of the inspection to the manufacturer. This action is necessary to detect and correct cracks in the aft fuselage skin at the longeron 28 skin splice, which could lead to loss of structural integrity of the aft fuselage, resulting in rapid decompression of the airplane. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

DATES: Comments must be received by November 24, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2001–NM–183–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. 2001–NM–183–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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jon Mowery, Aeronautical Engineer,

Airframe Branch, ANM–120L, FAA, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California 90712–4137; telephone (562) 627–5322; fax (562) 627–5210.

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 2001–NM–183–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. 2001–NM–183–AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056.

Discussion

The FAA has received a report indicating that a crack has been found in the aft fuselage skin at the longeron 28 skin splice. This crack was found just

forward of the aft pressure bulkhead on a McDonnell Douglas Model DC–8–71F airplane, between fuselage stations Y=1704 and Y=1717. Analysis indicated that the crack is due to fatigue and could be a result of multi-site damage. Failure to detect and correct such a crack before it grows to a critical length could lead to loss of structural integrity of the aft fuselage, resulting in rapid decompression of the airplane.

The subject area on Model DC–8–71F airplanes is almost identical to that on the other Model DC–8 airplanes. Therefore, those Model DC–8 airplanes may be subject to the unsafe condition revealed on the Model DC–8–71F airplanes.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

There is not yet any service information pertaining to the proposed inspection of the aft fuselage skin panel at the longeron 28 skin splice for cracks and the repair of any such cracks. The manufacturer is developing service information which may include repetitive inspections and repairs. However, several methods in the manufacturer’s Non-Destructive Testing Standard Practice Manual are referenced in this proposed AD as approved methods of inspection.

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 performing a one-time inspection of the aft fuselage skin panel at the longeron 28 skin splice for cracks, repairing any cracks detected, and reporting results of the inspection (both negative and positive) to the manufacturer.

Interim Action

This is considered to be interim action. The manufacturer has advised that it currently is developing a modification that will address the unsafe condition addressed by this AD. Once this modification is developed, approved, and available, the FAA may consider additional rulemaking.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 264 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 244 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 3 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed inspection and reporting of results, and that the average labor rate is \$65 per