

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION****Federal Aviation Administration****14 CFR Part 39****[Docket No. 2000-NM-110-AD]****RIN 2120-AA64****Airworthiness Directives; McDonnell Douglas Model DC-9-81 (MD-81), DC-9-82 (MD-82), DC-9-83 (MD-83), DC-9-87 (MD-87) and MD-88 Airplanes****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 all McDonnell Douglas Model DC-9-81 (MD-81), DC-9-82 (MD-82), DC-9-83 (MD-83), DC-9-87 (MD-87) and MD-88 airplanes. This proposal would require the implementation of a program of structural inspections of baseline structure to detect and correct fatigue cracking in order to ensure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes as they approach the manufacturer's original fatigue design life goal. This action is necessary to detect and correct fatigue cracking that could compromise the structural integrity of these airplanes. 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. 2000-0NM-110-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](mailto:9-anm-nprmcomment@faa.gov). Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain "Docket No. 2000-NM-110-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 the proposed rule may be obtained from Boeing Commercial Aircraft Group, Long Beach Division, 3855 Lakewood Boulevard, Long Beach, California 90846, Attention: Technical

Publications Business Administration, Dept. C1-L51 (2-60). This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington; or at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Mike Lee, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120L, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California 90712; telephone (562) 627-5325; 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 2000-NM-110-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. 2000-NM-110-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

**Discussion**

In the early 1980's, as part of its continuing work to maintain the structural integrity of older transport category airplanes, the FAA concluded that the incidence of fatigue cracking may increase as these airplanes reach or exceed their design service goal (DSG). A significant number of these airplanes were approaching or had exceeded the DSG on which the initial type certification approval was predicated. In light of this, and as a result of increased utilization, longer operational lives, and the high levels of safety expected of the currently operated transport category airplanes, we determined that a supplemental structural inspection program (SSIP) was necessary to ensure a high level of structural integrity for all airplanes in the transport fleet.

**Issuance of Advisory Circular**

As a follow-on from that determination, the FAA issued Advisory Circular (AC) No. 91-56, "Supplemental Structural Inspection Program for Large Transport Category Airplanes," dated May 6, 1981. That AC provides guidance material to manufacturers and operators for use in developing a continuing structural integrity program to ensure safe operation of older airplanes throughout their operational lives. This guidance material applies to transport airplanes that were certified under the fail-safe requirements of part 4b ("Airplane Airworthiness, Transport Categories") of the Civil Air Regulations of the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) (14 CFR part 25), and that have a maximum gross weight greater than 75,000 pounds. The procedures set forth in that AC are applicable to transport category airplanes operated under subpart D ("Special Flight Operations") of part 91 of the FAR (14 CFR part 91); part 121 ("Operating Requirements: Domestic, Flag, and Supplemental Operations"); part 125 ("Certification and Operations: Airplanes having a Seating Capacity of 20 or More Passengers or a Maximum Payload of 6,000 Pounds or More"); and part 135 ("Operating Requirements: Commuter and On-Demand Operations") of the FAR (14 CFR parts 121, 125, and 135). The objective of the SSIP was to establish inspection programs to ensure timely detection of fatigue cracking.