

Proposed Rules

Federal Register

Vol. 68, No. 204

Wednesday, October 22, 2003

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains notices to the public of the proposed issuance of rules and regulations. The purpose of these notices is to give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rule making prior to the adoption of the final rules.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2003–SW–28–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Agusta S.p.A. Model A109E Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for Agusta S.p.A. (Agusta) Model A109E helicopters. This proposal would require modifying each passenger compartment sliding door (door) by applying a kit to replace the levers and links. This proposal is prompted by instances of a door inadvertently opening during flight due to the unstable configuration of the door. The actions specified by this proposed AD are intended to prevent the inadvertent opening of a door during flight and loss of a passenger or other objects from the cabin.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before December 22, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003–SW–28–AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137. You may also send comments electronically to the Rules Docket at the following address: 9-asw-adcomments@faa.gov. Comments may be inspected at the Office of the Regional Counsel between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard Monschke, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, Fort Worth, Texas 76193–0110, telephone (817) 222–5116, fax (817) 222–5961.

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 should 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 will be considered before taking action on the proposed rule. The proposals contained in this document may be changed in light of the comments received.

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 mailed comments submitted in response to this proposal must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: “Comments to Docket No. 2003–SW–28–AD.” The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

Discussion

The Ente Nazionale per l’Aviazione Civile (ENAC), the airworthiness authority for Italy, notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on Agusta Model A109E helicopters. ENAC advises that the doors should be modified.

Agusta has issued Alert Bollettino Tecnico No. 109EP–33, dated March 19, 2003 (ABT), which specifies modifying the opening and closing mechanism of the passenger compartment sliding doors by installing a new lever and a new link to avoid the possibility of the mechanism not reaching the stowed position. Agusta reports the accidental opening during flight of one of the doors, on a few helicopters, without any harm to the passengers. ENAC classified this ABT as mandatory and issued AD No. 2003–109, dated March 27, 2003, to

ensure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters in Italy.

This helicopter model is manufactured in Italy and is type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of 14 CFR 21.29 and the applicable bilateral agreement. Pursuant to the applicable bilateral agreement, ENAC has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above. The FAA has examined the findings of ENAC, 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.

This previously described unsafe condition is likely to exist or develop on other helicopters of the same type design registered in the United States. Therefore, the proposed AD would require modifying the doors by installing a new lever and link and other hardware contained in kits, part number (P/N) 109–0823–25–101 (left hand) and (P/N) 109–0823–25–102 (right hand). The actions would be required to be accomplished in accordance with the ABT described previously.

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 AD system. The regulation now includes material that relates to altered products, special flight permits, and alternative methods of compliance. Because we have now included this material in part 39, we no longer need to include it in each individual AD.

The FAA estimates that this proposed AD would affect 34 helicopters of U.S. registry, and the proposed actions would take approximately 4 work hours per helicopter to accomplish at an average labor rate of \$65 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately \$3000 per helicopter. Based on these figures, we estimate the total cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators to be \$110,840 (\$3260 per helicopter). However, Agusta states in its ABT that it will supply the parts at no cost and will reimburse up to 4 work hours to modify the doors at a fixed rate of \$40. Assuming this warranty coverage, the estimated total cost impact of this AD on U.S. operators would be \$3400 (\$100 per helicopter).

The regulations proposed herein would not have a substantial direct effect on the States, on the relationship between the national Government and