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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2003–NM–173–AD; Amendment 39–13364; AD 2003–23–01]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 747–400, –400D, and –400F Series Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to certain Boeing Model 747–400, –400D, and –400F series airplanes, that requires reviewing airplane maintenance records; inspecting the yaw damper actuator portion of the upper and lower rudder power control modules (PCM) for cracking, and replacing the PCMs if necessary; and reporting airplane maintenance records review and inspection results to the manufacturer. This action is necessary to detect and correct cracking in the yaw damper actuator portion of the upper and lower rudder PCMs, which could result in an uncommanded left rudder hardover, consequent increased pilot workload, and possible runway departure upon landing. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

DATES: Effective December 18, 2003.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of December 18, 2003.

ADDRESSES: 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 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, Rules Docket, 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:

Doug Tsuji, Aerospace Engineer, Systems and Equipment Branch, ANM–130S, FAA, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056; telephone (425) 917–6487; fax (425) 917–6590.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A proposal to amend part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) to include an airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to certain Boeing Model 747–400, –400D, and –400F series airplanes was published in the **Federal Register** on August 28, 2003 (68 FR 51735). That action proposed to require reviewing airplane maintenance records; inspecting the yaw damper actuator portion of the upper and lower rudder power control modules (PCM) for cracking, and replacing the PCMs if necessary; and reporting airplane maintenance records review and inspection results to the manufacturer.

Comments

Interested persons have been afforded an opportunity to participate in the making of this amendment. Due consideration has been given to the comments received.

Agreement With the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)

Two commenters state that they agree with the NPRM.

Request To Revise Paragraph (f) of the NPRM

One commenter requests that paragraph (f) of the NPRM be revised to permit installation of the components without continuing inspections at each installation of the components. The commenter states that it does not believe that is the intent of the applicable service bulletin. The commenter further states that, without specific relief, paragraph (f) of the NPRM will eventually require inspections on parts with fewer total flight hours or total flight cycles than the thresholds specified by the NPRM.

The FAA notes that the requirements of paragraph (f) of the final rule to

prohibit units that have reached the thresholds specified in paragraph (f) of the final rule (15,000 total flight hours or more or 2,000 total flight cycles or more) may impose a burden to the affected operators. However, as noted in the “Interim Action” section of the NPRM, we consider the actions specified in this final rule to be interim actions, since the root cause of the fatigue cracking has not been determined. We are trying to gain better insight into the nature, cause, extent of the cracking, and to develop a final action for the unsafe condition. However, to prevent continuing inspections upon each installation, we acknowledge that some relief should be provided. Therefore, we have revised paragraph (f) of the final rule to specify that a rudder PCM with 15,000 total flight hours or more or 2,000 total flight hours or more may not be installed “unless it has been inspected within the previous 15,000 flight hours or 2,000 flight cycles” of the PCM. We have determined that the relief provided by revising paragraph (f) of the final rule will continue to provide an acceptable level of safety for the fleet.

Request To Clarify the Term Power Control Modules “PCMs”

One commenter, the airplane manufacturer, requests that use of the term “PCM” in the NPRM be clarified by adding the following words: “with a main manifold.” The commenter notes that the 15,000 total flight hours and 2,000 total flight cycle thresholds are based on the life of the PCM main manifold.

We agree that clarification is necessary, and have revised the final rule accordingly.

Request To Extend the Compliance Time

One commenter requests that the compliance time be extended from “within 3 months after the effective date of the AD” to “within 1 year after the effective date of the AD” for the following reasons:

- **Tool Availability**—The commenter notes that Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747–27A2397, dated July 24, 2003, states that no special tools are needed to perform the proposed ultrasonic inspection. However, the commenter points out that two special tools are actually needed and that it was only recently able to obtain them.