

necessary. That AD also provides for an optional terminating modification for the repetitive inspection requirements. This action would reduce the compliance time for the inspections for cracking of the same area. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to detect and correct fatigue cracking in the transition and pick-up angles of the lower part of the center fuselage, which could result in reduced structural integrity of the wing-fuselage support and fuselage pressure vessel. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

DATES: Comments must be received by December 18, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2002-NM-118-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. 2002-NM-118-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 Airbus Industrie, 1 Rond Point Maurice Bellonte, 31707 Blagnac Cedex, France. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dan Rodina, Aerospace Engineer, International Branch, ANM-116, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 227-2125; fax (425) 227-1149.

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 2002-NM-118-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. 2002-NM-118-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

On June 2, 1998, the FAA issued AD 98-12-18, amendment 39-10573 (63 FR 31345, June 9, 1998), applicable to certain Airbus Model A320-111, -211, and -231 series airplanes, to require repetitive inspections for cracking in the transition and pick-up angles in the lower part of the center fuselage area, and corrective action if necessary. That AD also provides for an optional terminating modification for the repetitive inspection requirements. That action was prompted by the issuance of mandatory continuing airworthiness information by a foreign civil airworthiness authority. The requirements of that AD are intended to detect and correct fatigue cracking in the transition and pick-up angles of the lower part of the center fuselage, which could result in reduced structural integrity of the wing-fuselage support and fuselage pressure vessel.

Actions Since Issuance of Previous Rule

Since the issuance of AD 98-12-18, the Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on certain Airbus Model A320-111, -211, and -231 series airplanes. The DGAC advises that a full-scale fatigue survey on the Model A320 fleet revealed that the weight of fuel at landing and the mean flight duration are higher than those defined for the analysis of fatigue-related tasks. This has led to an adjustment of the fatigue mission for the A320 fleet, in that the DGAC has reduced the compliance threshold and intervals in France from landings to flight cycles and flight hours for accomplishment of the inspections for fatigue cracking required by the existing AD. Fatigue-related cracking in the pick-up and transition angles in the lower part of the center fuselage could result in reduced structural integrity of the wing-fuselage support and fuselage pressure vessel.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

Airbus has issued Service Bulletin A320-53-1028, Revision 01, dated February 12, 2002. The inspection procedures specified in Revision 01 are essentially the same as those in the original issue of the service bulletin, which was referenced in the existing AD for accomplishment of the inspections and corrective action. However, Revision 01 has a change that recommends a reduction in the compliance time specified in the original issue by adding flight cycles and flight hours as a reduction in thresholds.

Airbus also has issued Service Bulletin A320-53-1027, Revision 03, dated February 12, 2002. The modification procedures in Revision 03 are essentially the same as those in Revision 02 of the service bulletin, which was referenced in the existing AD for accomplishment of the modification. The changes in Revision 03 are minor editorial changes.

The DGAC classified these service bulletins as mandatory and issued French airworthiness directive 2002-183(B), dated April 3, 2002, to ensure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in France.

FAA's Conclusions

These airplane models are manufactured in France and are type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of section 21.29 of the Federal Aviation