

- Take approximately 1 work hour per helicopter to determine and record the initial number of TEs; 1 work hour to record the number of TEs after each day's operation or 100 external lift operations, whichever occurs first; 1 work hour to inspect a set of blades for a crack; and 8 work hours to replace a set of blades at an average labor rate of \$65 per work hour.

- Cost approximately \$9,500 per blade.

Based on these amounts, the estimated cost impact of the AD on U.S. operators will be \$16,655,600 for the labor for the additional record keeping and inspections over the life of one set of blades, assuming there are 284 additional inspections and the TEs must be recorded 353 times, and an additional \$38,416,000 in parts and labor, assuming one set of blades (5 blades) are replaced on each aircraft in the entire fleet. The total estimated cost impact of the AD on U.S. operators is \$55,071,600.

### Comments Invited

Although this action is in the form of a final rule that involves requirements affecting flight safety and, thus, was not preceded by notice and an opportunity for public comment, comments are invited on this rule. Interested persons are invited to comment on this 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 FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC. All communications received on or before the closing date for comments will be considered, and this rule may be amended in light of the comments received. Factual information that supports the commenter's ideas and suggestions is extremely helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of the AD action and determining whether additional rulemaking action would be needed.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the rule that might suggest a need to modify the rule. All comments submitted will be available in the Rules Docket for examination by interested persons. A report that summarizes each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this AD will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their comments

submitted in response to this rule must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket No. 2003-SW-16-AD." The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

The regulations adopted herein will not have a substantial direct effect on the States, on the relationship between the national Government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. Therefore, it is determined that this final rule does not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132.

The FAA has determined that this regulation is an emergency regulation that must be issued immediately to correct an unsafe condition in aircraft, and that it is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866. It has been determined further that this action involves an emergency regulation under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979). If it is determined that this emergency regulation otherwise would be significant under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures, a final regulatory evaluation will be prepared and placed in the Rules Docket. A copy of it, if filed, may be obtained from the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption ADDRESSES.

### List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Safety.

### Adoption of the Amendment

■ Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration amends part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) as follows:

### PART 39—AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

■ 1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

#### § 39.13 [Amended]

■ 2. Section 39.13 is amended by adding a new airworthiness directive to read as follows:

**2003-24-01 MD Helicopters, Inc.:**  
Amendment 39-13370. Docket No. 2003-SW-16-AD.

**Applicability:** Models 369A, H, HE, HM, HS, D, or E, with a main rotor blade (blade), part number (P/N) 500P2100-BSC, 500P2100-101, or 500P2100-301, and modified with Helicopter Technology Company, LLC, Supplemental Type

Certificate (STC) No. SR09172RC, SR09074RC, or SR09184RC, installed, certificated in any category.

**Compliance:** Required as indicated, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent fatigue cracking of the blade, blade failure, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter, accomplish the following:

(a) Within 12 hours time-in-service (TIS) or 30 days, whichever occurs first, determine and record on the component history card or equivalent record the number of torque events (TEs) accumulated on each blade. Record a torque event (TE) for each transition to a hover or landing from forward flight with an airspeed of 30 or more knots or any external lift operation. An external lift operation is defined as the pickup and drop-off of an external load. (An external lift operation with a return flight at an airspeed of 30 or more knots back to the pick-up location would be recorded as two TEs).

(1) If you cannot determine the actual number of TEs for a blade, assume and record 13,720 TEs as the accumulated total number of TEs on that blade.

(2) Thereafter, after each day's operation or after 100 external lift operations, whichever occurs first, record on the component history card or equivalent record the number of TEs that occurred during that period for each blade.

**Note 1:** Helicopter Technology Company, LLC, Mandatory Service Bulletin Notice No. 2100-3R2, dated December 30, 2002, pertains to the subject of this AD.

(b) For each blade with 750 or more hours TIS and 13,720 or more TEs, before further flight and thereafter at intervals not to exceed 35 hours TIS or 200 TEs, whichever occurs first:

(1) Lift the outboard end of the blade until the blade is off the droop stop.

(2) Using a bright light and a 10× or higher magnifying glass, inspect for a crack on the first 24-inch inboard area of the bottom side of the blade. Pay particular attention to the area around the root fitting, its adjacent doubler and skin, and in line with the root fitting attach bolts. Also, pay particular attention at blade stations: 22.6, 24.1, 25.1, 25.3, 27.9, and 36.4 (these blade stations are located 4.9, 6.4, 7.4, 7.6, 10.2, and 18.7 inches outboard (parallel to the blade) from the center of the root fitting and lead lag attach bolt holes closest to the trailing edge).

(3) Using a bright light, inspect for a crack on the remaining length of the bottom side of the blade.

(4) Lower the blade back onto the droop stop.

(5) Using a bright light and a 10× or higher magnifying glass, inspect for a crack on the first 24-inch inboard area of topside of the blade. Pay particular attention to the area around the root fitting, its adjacent doubler and skin, and in line with root fitting attach bolts. Also pay particular attention at blade stations: 22.6, 24.1, 25.1, 25.3, 27.9, and 36.4 (these blade stations are located 4.9, 6.4, 7.4, 7.6, 10.2, and 18.7 inches outboard (parallel to the blade) from the center of the root fitting bushing and lead lag attach bolt hole closest to the trailing edge).

(6) Using a bright light, inspect for a crack on the remaining length of the topside of each blade.