

Discussion

The FAA has received reports of cracks and damage to the transfer pipe assembly installation for the tail tank on McDonnell Douglas Model MD-11 airplanes. The support brackets and clamps for the refuel and fuel transfer lines of the tail fuel tank are being cracked and damaged, resulting in chafing and denting of the transfer pipe assembly. The cause of the cracks and damage is transient pressure surges that are higher than designed for the fuel transfer piping configuration during fuel transfer operations. This condition, if not corrected, could result in damage and cracks to the transfer pipe assembly installation for the tail tank, which could result in fuel leakage and possible ignition.

The subject area on certain Model MD-11F airplanes is almost identical to that on the affected Model MD-11 airplanes. Therefore, those MD-11F airplanes may be subject to the unsafe condition revealed on the MD-11 airplanes.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved McDonnell Douglas Alert Service Bulletin MD11-28A110, dated May 2, 2000, which describes procedures for performing repetitive inspections of the transfer pipe assembly installation for the tail tank for damage and cracks; and repairing and/or replacing any damaged or cracked part with a serviceable part.

Explanation of Requirements of Proposed Rule

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other products of this same type design, the proposed AD would require accomplishment of the actions specified in the service bulletin described previously. Although the service bulletin referenced in the proposed AD specifies to submit certain information to the manufacturer, the proposed AD does not include such a requirement.

Clarification of Service Bulletin Applicability

The FAA points out that McDonnell Douglas Model MD-11F airplanes are not specifically identified in the service bulletin. However, those airplanes are identified by manufacturer's fuselage numbers in the service bulletin effectivity listing. Therefore, the FAA has revised the applicability in the NPRM to include Model MD-11F airplanes, in addition to Model MD-11 airplanes.

Interim Action

This proposed AD is considered to be interim action. The manufacturer has advised that it currently is developing Service Bulletin MD11-28-111 that will address the unsafe condition addressed by this proposed AD. Once this new service bulletin is developed, approved, and available, the FAA may consider additional rulemaking.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 187 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 60 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 2 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed inspection, and that the average labor rate is \$65 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$7,800, or \$130 per airplane, per inspection cycle.

The cost impact figures discussed above are based on assumptions that no operator has yet accomplished any of the proposed requirements of this AD action, and that no operator would accomplish those actions in the future if this proposed AD were not adopted. The cost impact figures discussed in AD rulemaking actions represent only the time necessary to perform the specific actions actually required by the AD. These figures typically do not include incidental costs, such as the time required to gain access and close up, planning time, or time necessitated by other administrative actions. Manufacturer warranty remedies may be available for labor costs associated with this proposed AD. As a result, the costs attributable to the proposed AD may be less than stated above.

Regulatory Impact

The regulations proposed herein would 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 proposal would not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify that this proposed regulation (1) is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866; (2) is not a "significant rule" under the DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979); and (3) if promulgated, will not have a significant economic impact, positive or negative, on a substantial number of small entities

under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act. A copy of the draft regulatory evaluation prepared for this action is contained in the Rules Docket. A copy of it may be obtained by contacting 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.

The Proposed Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration proposes to amend 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 the following new airworthiness directive:

McDonnell Douglas: Docket 2002-NM-292-AD.

Applicability: Model MD-11 and MD-11F airplanes, as listed in McDonnell Douglas Alert Service Bulletin MD11-28A110, dated May 2, 2000; certificated in any category.

Compliance: Required as indicated, unless accomplished previously.

To detect and correct damage and cracks to the transfer pipe assembly installation for the tail tank, which could result in fuel leakage and possible ignition, accomplish the following:

Service Bulletin References

(a) The term "service bulletin," as used in this AD, means the Accomplishment Instructions of McDonnell Douglas Alert Service Bulletin MD11-28A110, dated May 2, 2000. Although the service bulletin referenced in this AD specifies to submit certain information to the manufacturer, this AD does not include such a requirement.

Initial Inspection

(b) Within 700 flight hours from the effective date of this AD, perform a general visual inspection to detect any damage and cracking on the transfer pipe assembly installation for the tail tank, in accordance with the service bulletin.

Note 1: For the purposes of this AD, a general visual inspection is defined as: "A visual examination of an interior or exterior area, installation, or assembly to detect obvious damage, failure, or irregularity. This level of inspection is made from within touching distance unless otherwise specified. A mirror may be necessary to enhance visual access to all exposed surfaces in the inspection area. This level of inspection is