

57A1277, Revision 1, dated November 25, 2003, as listed in the regulations, is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of December 4, 2003.

The incorporation by reference of Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737–57A1277, dated July 25, 2002, as listed in the regulations, was approved previously by the Director of the Federal Register as of November 15, 2002 (67 FR 66316, October 31, 2002).

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before January 30, 2004.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003–NM–249–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-iarcomment@faa.gov*. Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain “Docket No. 2003–NM–249–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 this AD may be obtained from Boeing Commercial Airplanes, P.O. Box 3707, Seattle, Washington 98124–2207. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 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:** Robert Hardwick, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM–120S, FAA, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056; telephone (425) 917–6457; fax (425) 917–6590.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On October 22, 2002, the FAA issued AD 2002–22–05, amendment 39–12929 (67 FR 66316, October 31, 2002), applicable to all Boeing Model 737–100, –200, –200C, –300, –400, and –500 series airplanes, to require repetitive inspections to find cracks, fractures, or corrosion of each carriage spindle of the left and right outboard mid-flaps; and corrective action, if necessary. That AD also provides for an optional action of overhaul or replacement of the carriage spindles, which would extend the repetitive inspection interval. That

action was prompted by reports indicating fractures of the carriage spindles of the outboard mid-flaps. The actions required by that AD are intended to prevent severe flap asymmetry due to fractures of the carriage spindles on an outboard mid-flap, which could result in reduced control or loss of controllability of the airplane.

#### **Actions Since Issuance of Previous Rule**

Since the issuance of that AD, the FAA has received a report indicating that the inboard and outboard carriage spindles (number 7 and 8 carriage spindles) fractured on the right outboard flap on a Boeing Model 737–200 series airplane during approach to landing. The flight crew reported a loud bang approximately 500 feet above ground level (AGL) followed by the airplane rolling off hard to the right. Significant aileron and rudder inputs were required to maintain level flight. The fractures resulted from stress-corrosion cracking.

Investigation revealed that the fractured carriage spindles had been ultrasonically inspected per AD 2002–22–05 three weeks before the reported incident. Corrosion on the fractured face of the inboard carriage spindle indicated that it had failed on some flight previous to the failure of the outboard carriage spindle, which had almost no corrosion on the fractured surface. The outboard carriage spindle failed when the flaps were deployed to detent 40 and at an altitude of 500 feet AGL.

If both the inboard and outboard carriage spindles fracture in the critical section on an outboard flap when the mid-flaps are deployed beyond detent 15, it could result in loss of controllability of the airplane.

The carriage spindles on all Model 737–100, –200C, –300, –400, and –500 series airplanes are similar to those on the affected Model 737–200 series airplanes. Therefore, all of these models may be subject to the same unsafe condition.

#### **Other Relevant Rulemaking**

The FAA has previously issued a supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) Docket 2002–NM–219–AD (68 FR 62409, November 4, 2003), applicable to all Boeing Model 737–100, –200, –200C, –300, –400, and –500 series airplanes. That action would supersede AD 2002–22–05 to require repetitive inspections to find cracks, fractures, or corrosion of each carriage spindle of the left and right outboard mid-flaps; and corrective action, if necessary. That action also would mandate the previously optional overhaul or replacement of the carriage

spindles, which would end the repetitive inspections required by the existing AD. The comment period for that action closes on December 1, 2003.

This AD affects the proposed requirements of that supplemental NPRM. We plan to address any effects of this AD on those proposed requirements in future rulemaking.

#### **Explanation of Relevant Service Information**

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737–57A1277, Revision 1, dated November 25, 2003, which describes the following procedures:

- Performing repetitive nondestructive test (NDT) inspections and general visual inspections for each carriage spindle of the left and right outboard mid-flaps to detect cracks, corrosion, or severed carriage spindles; and applicable corrective actions, if necessary. The corrective actions include removing the carriage spindle and installing a new or serviceable carriage spindle.

- Performing repetitive gap checks of the inboard and outboard carriage of the left and right outboard mid-flaps to determine if there is a positive indication of a severed carriage spindle; and corrective actions, if necessary. The corrective actions include removing the carriage spindle and installing a new or serviceable carriage spindle.

The service bulletin also describes procedures for determining whether carriage spindles that are removed can be overhauled, and if so, references appropriate overhaul procedures.

This service bulletin recommends compliance times at the following approximate intervals, depending on the flight cycles or years in service of the carriage spindle:

1. For the gap check, ranging from daily to 15 days; and
2. For the NDT and general visual inspections, ranging from 6 days to 180 days.

#### **Explanation of Requirements of Rule**

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other airplanes of this same type design, this AD supersedes AD 2002–22–05 to continue to require repetitive inspections to find cracks, fractures, or corrosion of each carriage spindle of the left and right outboard mid-flaps; and corrective action, if necessary. This AD also requires accomplishment of the actions specified in the Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737–57A1277 described previously, except as described below.