

(i) Information on general inspection of these parts can be found in the Boeing 747 Aircraft Maintenance Manual, section 72-00-00, and in PW Standard Practices Manual, P/N 585005.

Reporting Requirements

(j) Report within 30 calendar days of the inspection, the results that equal or exceed the reject criteria to: Engine Certification Office, FAA, Engine and Propeller Directorate, 12 New England Executive Park, Burlington, MA 01803-5299; telephone (781) 238-7189; fax (781) 238-7199. Reporting requirements have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget control number 2120-0056.

Alternative Methods of Compliance

(k) The Manager, Engine Certification Office, has the authority to approve alternative methods of compliance for this AD if requested using the procedures found in 14 CFR 39.19.

Material Incorporated by Reference

(l) None.

Related Information

(m) None.

Issued in Burlington, Massachusetts, on November 25, 2003.

Jay J. Pardee,

Manager, Engine and Propeller Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2003-CE-03-AD; Amendment 39-13376; AD 2003-24-07]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; The New Piper Aircraft, Inc. Models PA-31, PA-31-300, PA-31-325, PA-31-350, PA-31P, PA-31T, PA-31T1, PA-31T2, PA-31T3, and PA-31P-350 Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that applies to all The New Piper Aircraft, Inc. (Piper) Models PA-31, PA-31-300, PA-31-325, PA-31-350, PA-31P, PA-31T, PA-31T1, PA-31T2, PA-31T3, and PA-31P-350 airplanes. This AD requires you to install an inspection hole (or use for inspection the tooling hole in the rudder bottom rib), conduct a detailed visual inspection of the rudder torque tube and associated ribs for corrosion, and, if corrosion is found, replace or repair the rib/rudder torque

tube assembly. This AD is the result of reports of rudder tube corrosion. The actions specified by this AD are intended to detect and correct corrosion in the rudder torque tube assembly and rudder rib, which could result in failure of the rudder torque tube. This failure could lead to loss of rudder control.

DATES: This AD becomes effective on February 9, 2004.

As of February 9, 2004, the Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulation.

ADDRESSES: You may get the service information referenced in this AD from The New Piper Aircraft, Inc., Customer Services, 2926 Piper Drive, Vero Beach, Florida 32960; telephone: (772) 567-4361; facsimile: (772) 978-6584.

You may view this information at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003-CE-03-AD, 901 Locust, Room 506, Kansas City, Missouri 64106; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

William O. Herderich, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Atlanta Aircraft Certification Office, One Crown Center, 1895 Phoenix Boulevard, Suite 450, Atlanta, Georgia 30349; telephone: (770) 703-6082; facsimile: (770) 703-6097.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Discussion

What events have caused this AD?

The FAA has received several reports of rudder tube and rib corrosion on Piper PA-31 Series airplanes. The area surrounding the rudder torque tube assembly and rudder rib does not have a means or access to inspect in this area and neither means nor exits for water to drain out.

What is the potential impact if FAA took no action? Corrosion in the rudder torque tube assembly and rudder rib could result in failure of the rudder torque tube. This failure could lead to loss of rudder control.

Has FAA taken any action to this point? We issued a proposal to amend part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) to include an AD that would apply to all Piper Models PA-31, PA-31-300, PA-31-325, PA-31-350, PA-31P, PA-31T, PA-31T1, PA-31T2, PA-31T3, and PA-31P-350 airplanes. This proposal was published in the **Federal Register** as a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) on June 3, 2003 (68 FR 33030). The NPRM proposed to require you to install an inspection hole, conduct a detailed

visual inspection of the rudder torque tube and associated ribs for corrosion, and, if corrosion is found, replace the rib/rudder torque tube assembly.

Comments

Was the public invited to comment?

We provided the public the opportunity to participate in the development of this AD. The following presents the comments received on the proposal and FAA's response to each comment:

Comment Issue No. 1: Extend the Compliance Time

What is the commenter's concern? A commenter recommends extending the compliance time from 100 hours time-in-service (TIS) to 150 hours TIS. The commenter states that the extension is necessary due to a reported lack of parts and the difficulty in scheduling involved with AD compliance.

What is FAA's response to the concern? The FAA agrees that 150 hours TIS would be a more realistic compliance time.

We are changing the final rule AD action accordingly.

Comment Issue No. 2: Allow Option to Repair Parts

What is the commenter's concern?

The commenter recommends the following: if you find "light corrosion" or "corrosion that could significantly weaken the rib/rudder torque tube assembly that is less than 50 percent of the thickness over an area less than two square inches" then you may clean up, repair, and coat the corroded area to prevent further damage and continue the part in service.

What is FAA's response to the concern? The FAA is currently unaware of any approved repair design for the rib/rudder torque tube assembly. However, FAA has no objection to operation of aircraft with parts that have been repaired or reworked per an FAA-approved repair design.

Therefore, we are changing the final rule AD action to provide the option of repairing with an FAA-approved design.

Comment Issue No. 3: Special Flight Permits Are Not Addressed in the NPRM

What is the commenter's concern?

The commenter states that since special flight permits are not addressed in the NPRM, the current 14 CFR part 39 applies and that there is no restriction against issuing a special flight permit.

What is FAA's response to the concern? On July 10, 2002, the FAA published a new version of 14 CFR part 39 (67 FR 47997, July 22, 2002), which governs the FAA's AD system. This regulation now includes material that