

civil airworthiness authority. The requirements of that AD are intended to detect and correct cracking of the splice fitting at fuselage FR 47, which could result in reduced structural integrity of the airplane.

#### **Actions Since Issuance of Previous AD**

Since the issuance of AD 2001-03-14, 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 A300 B4 and all A300-600 series airplanes. The DGAC advises that cracks have been found on airplanes on which the modification specified in the existing AD has been done, and HFEC inspections of the modification performed. A laboratory investigation was done on a cracked splice fitting, and the analysis of crack growth rate shows that an inspection program is necessary for all airplanes affected by the existing AD. This program involves expanding the inspection area to fuselage frame (FR) 47 between stringers 24 and 26 (the existing AD specified stringers 24 and 25), and adding new repetitive inspections. Cracking of the splice fitting at fuselage FR 47 could result in reduced structural integrity of the airplane.

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

Airbus has issued Service Bulletins A300-53-0350 (for Model A300 series airplanes) and A300-53-6123 (for Model A300-600 series airplanes), both Revision 01, both dated December 18, 2001. The procedures specified in Revision 01 of the service bulletins are similar to those specified in the original issue of the service bulletins referenced in the existing AD for accomplishment of the inspections and corrective actions. However, Revision 01 defines a new inspection program for pre-mod and post-mod airplanes which expands the inspection area to fuselage frame (FR) 47 between stringers 24 and 26, and adds an HFEC rotating probe inspection after bolt removals. Revision 01 also adds airplanes to the applicability specified in the original issue. Revision 01 of the service bulletins also describes certain repair procedures. The DGAC classified the service bulletins as mandatory and issued French airworthiness directive 2002-184(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 Regulations (14 CFR 21.29) and the applicable bilateral airworthiness agreement. Pursuant to this bilateral airworthiness agreement, the DGAC has kept us informed of the situation described above. We have examined the findings of the DGAC, reviewed all available information, and determined that AD action is necessary for products of this type design that are certificated for operation in the United States.

#### **Explanation of Requirements of Proposed AD**

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other airplanes of the same type design registered in the United States, the proposed AD would supersede AD 2001-03-14 to require new repetitive inspections of an expanded area and to add airplanes to the applicability in the existing AD. The actions would be required to be accomplished in accordance with the service bulletins described previously, except as discussed below.

#### **Clarification of Compliance Times**

The compliance times specified in the service bulletins for doing the high frequency eddy current inspections do not specify whether the inspections should be done at the earlier or later of the recommended flight cycles/flight hours. This proposed AD adds "whichever is first" to those compliance times. In addition, the compliance times specified do not give an effective date for when the inspections are to be accomplished; this proposed AD requires accomplishment of the inspections "after the effective date of this AD."

#### **Interim Action**

We consider this proposed AD interim action. The manufacturer is currently developing a modification that would address the unsafe condition identified in this proposed AD. Once this modification is developed, approved, and available, we may consider additional rulemaking.

#### **Differences Between Proposed AD and Service Information**

Although the service bulletins specify that the manufacturer may be contacted for disposition of certain repair conditions, this proposed AD would require the repair of those conditions to be accomplished in accordance with a method approved by either the FAA or the DGAC (or its delegated agent). In light of the type of repair that would be

required to address the identified unsafe condition, and in consonance with existing bilateral airworthiness agreements, we have determined that, for the proposed AD, a repair approved by either us or the DGAC would be acceptable for compliance with this proposed AD.

Service Bulletin A300-53-0350 specifies doing the initial inspection at the next C-check, but not exceeding a certain number of flight cycles or flight hours, as the recommended compliance time. Because "C-check" schedules vary among operators, such a nonspecific interval would provide no assurance that operators would do the inspection within the prescribed schedule. This proposed AD would exclude the C-check and specify only flight cycles or flight hours. We find that such a compliance time is appropriate for affected airplanes to continue to operate without compromising safety.

The service bulletins referenced in this proposed AD specify to submit certain inspection findings to the manufacturer; however, this AD does not include such a requirement.

#### **Cost Impact**

There are approximately 83 airplanes of U.S. registry that would be affected by this proposed AD.

The inspection of an expanded area that is proposed in this AD action would take approximately 29 work hours per airplane to accomplish, at an average labor rate of \$65 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed inspection on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$156,455, or \$1,885 per airplane, per inspection cycle.

The cost impact figure discussed above is based on assumptions that no operator has yet accomplished any of the current or proposed requirements of this AD action, and that no operator would accomplish those actions in the future if this 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.

#### **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,