

ultrasonic inspection, or repetitive visual inspections and eventual ultrasonic inspection, to detect cracking of the longitudinal skin splice above the mid-passenger door panels, and corrective actions if necessary. This action would require repetitive ultrasonic inspections to detect cracking of certain skin lap joints in additional areas of the fuselage and repair if necessary. This action also would expand the applicability of the existing AD to include additional airplanes. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to detect and correct cracking of certain skin lap joints, which could result in reduced structural integrity and decompression of the airplane. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

DATES: Comments must be received by January 20, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2001-NM-111-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-nprmcomment@faa.gov*. Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain "Docket No. 2001-NM-111-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 for Windows or ASCII text.

The service information referenced in the proposed rule may be obtained from Airbus Industrie, 1 Rond Point Maurice Bellonte, 31707 Blagnac Cedex, France. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Anthony Jopling, Aerospace Engineer, International Branch, ANM-116, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 227-2190; fax (425) 227-1149.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

Interested persons are invited to participate in the making of the proposed rule by submitting such written, views, or arguments as they may desire. Communications shall identify the Rules Docket number and

be submitted in triplicate to the address specified above. All communications received on or before the closing date for comments, specified above, will be considered before taking action on the proposed rule. The proposals contained in this action may be changed in light of comments received.

Submit comments using the following format:

- Organize comments issue-by issue. For example, discuss a request to change the compliance time and a request to change the service bulletin reference as two separate issues.

- For each issue, state what specific change to the proposed AD is being requested.

- Include justification (*e.g.*, reasons or data) for each request.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the proposed rule. All comments submitted will be available, both before and after the closing date for comments, in the Rules Docket for examination by interested persons. A report summarizing each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this proposal will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their comments submitted in response to this action must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket Number 2001-NM-111-AD." The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

Availability of NPRMs

Any person may obtain a copy of this NPRM by submitting a request to the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2001-NM-111-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

On January 31, 2000, the FAA issued AD 2000-02-39, amendment 39-11557 (65 FR 5756, February 7, 2000), applicable to certain Airbus Model A300 series airplanes, to require either a one-time ultrasonic inspection, or repetitive visual inspections and eventual ultrasonic inspection, to detect cracking of the longitudinal skin splice above the mid-passenger door panels, and corrective actions if necessary. That action was prompted by notification from the Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, that during a routine maintenance check on an Airbus Model A300 series airplane, a horizontal crack of 35.6 inches was

detected in the surrounding panel above the right mid-passenger door. The requirements of that AD are intended to detect and correct cracking of the longitudinal skin splice (skin lap joint) above the mid-passenger door panels, which could result in reduced structural integrity of the fuselage pressure vessel.

Actions Since Issuance of Previous Rule

Since the issuance of that AD, further analysis by the manufacturer revealed that additional areas with similar stress loading and design may also be affected by cracking. Because of the similar stress loading and design, cracking of certain skin lap joints may exist on all Airbus Model A300 B4-600, B4-600R, F4-600R, C4-605R Variant F (collectively called A300-600), and A310 series airplanes; therefore, those airplanes may also be subject to the same unsafe condition described above. The DGAC issued French airworthiness directive 2002-639(B), dated December 24, 2002, to ensure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in France. That French airworthiness directive supersedes French airworthiness directives 2000-001-300(B)R1 and 2001-071(B).

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

For Model A300 B2 and A300 B4 series airplanes, Airbus has issued Service Bulletins A300-53-0354, Revision 02, dated December 13, 2001; A300-53-0356, dated December 26, 2000; and A300-53-0357, dated December 26, 2000. These service bulletins describe procedures for repetitive ultrasonic inspections to detect cracking in certain skin lap joints, and repair if necessary.

- Service Bulletin A300-53-0354 describes procedures for repetitive inspections of skin lap joints located above the mid-passenger doors. If repair is necessary, operators are instructed to do temporary or final repair, as applicable, per the applicable repair drawing.

- Service Bulletin A300-53-0356 describes procedures for repetitive inspections of skin lap joints located below the mid-passenger doors and in the lower fuselage aft of the wing. If repairs are necessary, operators are instructed to do a final repair per the applicable Airbus structural repair manual. The effectivity of this specific service bulletin excludes those airplanes modified by Airbus Modification 2611 in production.

- Service Bulletin A300-53-0357 describes procedures for repetitive inspections on skin lap joints located above the aft-passenger doors. If repair