

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2001-NM-309-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-309-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 Boeing Commercial Aircraft Group, Long Beach Division, 3855 Lakewood Boulevard, Long Beach, California 90846, Attention: Data and Service Management, Dept. C1-L5A (D800-0024). This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington; or at the FAA, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Maureen Moreland, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120L, FAA, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California 90712-4137; telephone (562) 627-5238; fax (562) 627-5210.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

Interested persons are invited to participate in the making of the proposed rule by submitting such written data, 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 the 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-309-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-309-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

The FAA has received a report from the manufacturer indicating the detection of 22 holes in the rear spar of the left and right wings of a Boeing Model 717-200 airplane with bolts installed in uncoined, clearance fit holes. This installation was not in accordance with the manufacturer's design, which specified stress-coining of all 22 holes. The design was intended to eliminate the possibility of fatigue cracking such as that previously detected on a McDonnell Douglas DC-9 airplane, which is the predecessor to the Model 717-200 airplane. The manufacturer also has determined that 9 out of the 22 holes in the rear spar must be cold-worked, followed by the installation of Hi-Lok fasteners in all 22 holes. Such conditions, if not corrected, may be a potential source of fatigue cracking of the rear spar of the wings, which could result in reduced structural integrity of the airplane.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Service Bulletin 717-57-0001, Revision 01, including Evaluation Form, dated January 6, 2003, which describes procedures for modification of certain attachment holes in the rear spar of the

left and right wings. The modification includes cold working 9 uncoined attachment holes and replacing 22 bolts with Hi-Lok fasteners. Accomplishment of the actions specified in the service bulletin is intended to adequately address the identified unsafe condition.

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, except as discussed below.

Difference Between Proposed Rule and Service Bulletin

Operators should note that, although the service bulletin recommends accomplishing the modification "Within 30,000 landings after the issue date of this service bulletin," the FAA has determined that such a compliance time would not address the identified unsafe condition in a timely manner. In developing an appropriate compliance time for this AD, the FAA considered not only the manufacturer's recommendation, but the degree of urgency associated with addressing the subject unsafe condition, the average utilization of the affected fleet, and the time necessary to perform the modification. In light of all of these factors, the FAA finds a compliance time of "Before the accumulation of 30,000 total flight cycles or within 10 years after the effective date of the AD, whichever is first," for completing the required actions to be warranted, in that it represents an appropriate interval of time allowable for affected airplanes to continue to operate without compromising safety.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 57 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 39 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 5 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed modification, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately \$955 per airplane. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$48,945, or \$1,255 per airplane.

The cost impact figure discussed above is based on assumptions that no operator has yet accomplished any of the proposed requirements of this AD action, and that no operator would