

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Aviation Administration****14 CFR Part 39****[Docket No. 2002–SW–25–AD]****RIN 2120–AA64****Airworthiness Directives; Schweizer Aircraft Corporation Model 269A, 269A–1, 269B, 269C, and TH–55A Helicopters****AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.**ACTION:** Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes the superseding of an existing airworthiness directive (AD) that applies to Schweizer Aircraft Corporation (Schweizer) Model 269A, 269A–1, 269B, 269C, and TH–55A helicopters. That AD currently requires inspecting the lugs on certain aft cluster fittings, and each aluminum end fitting on certain tailboom struts. Modifying or replacing each strut assembly within a specified time period and serializing certain strut assemblies are also required by the existing AD. This proposed AD would require the same actions as the existing AD, would require a one-time inspection and repair, if necessary, of certain additional cluster fittings, and would require replacement and modification of certain cluster fittings within 150 hours time-in-service (TIS) or 6 months, whichever occurs first. This proposal is prompted by the need to expand the applicability to include certain Hughes-manufactured cluster fittings and to provide a terminating action for the repetitive-dye-penetrant inspections of the cluster fittings. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent failure of a tailboom support strut or a cluster fitting, which could cause rotation of a tailboom into the main rotor blades, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before April 28, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2002–SW–25–AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137. You may also send comments electronically to the Rules Docket at the following address: 9-asw-adcomments@faa.gov. Comments may be inspected at the Office of the Regional Counsel between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

George Duckett, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, New York Aircraft Certification Office, Airframe and Propulsion Branch, 10 Fifth Street, 3rd Floor, Valley Stream, New York, telephone (516) 256–7525, fax (516) 568–2716.

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 should 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 will be considered before taking action on the proposed rule. The proposals contained in this document may be changed in light of the comments received.

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 mailed comments submitted in response to this proposal must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: “Comments to Docket No. 2002–SW–25–AD.” The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

Discussion

On April 12, 2002, the FAA issued AD 2001–25–52, Amendment 39–12726 (67 FR 19646, April 23, 2002), to require the following:

- Within 10 hours TIS and thereafter at intervals not to exceed 50 hours TIS, dye-penetrant inspect and replace, if necessary, each cluster fitting, part number (P/N) 269A2234 and P/N 269A2235;
- At intervals not to exceed 50 hours TIS, visually inspect the strut aluminum end fittings for deformation or damage, dye-penetrant inspect the strut aluminum end fittings for a crack, and replace deformed, damaged, or cracked parts.
- Within 500 hours TIS or one year, whichever occurs first, modify or replace the strut assemblies.

- Within 100 hours TIS, for Model 269C helicopters, serialize each strut assembly, P/N 269A2015–5 and 269A2015–11.

That action was prompted by an accident in the United Kingdom involving the in-flight structural failure of a Model 269C helicopter. The requirements of that AD are intended to prevent failure of a lug on a cluster fitting, which could result in rotation of a tailboom into the main rotor blades, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter. The existing AD, which superseded AD 76–18–01 (41 FR 37093, September 2, 1976), includes a reference to inspecting the center attachment fitting. However, AD 93–21–03 (58 FR 59944, November 12, 1993), Docket 91–ASW–11, addressed the unsafe conditions of the center attachment fitting and it is unnecessary to further address those issues in this proposed AD.

Since the issuance of the existing AD, the FAA has determined that the pool of cluster fittings that needs inspecting should be expanded to include certain Hughes-manufactured cluster fittings that were inadvertently omitted from the applicability of the existing AD because of the failure to include Hughes-manufactured P/N's, 269A2234–3 and 269A2235–3, in the applicability. Also, the manufacturer has completed the development of a modification kit for the cluster fitting that can serve as a terminating action for the repetitive 50-hour TIS dye-penetrant inspection.

The unsafe condition described previously is likely to exist or develop on other helicopters of the same type designs. Therefore, the proposed AD would supersede AD 2001–25–52 to require the following:

- Within 10 hours TIS and thereafter at intervals not to exceed 50 hours TIS, dye-penetrant inspect the lugs and replace any cracked cluster fitting.
- Within 150 hours TIS or 6 months, whichever occurs first, replace or modify, using kit, P/N SA–269K–106–1, each cluster fitting, P/N 269A2234 and P/N 269A2235.
- For strut assemblies, P/N 269A2015 or P/N 269A2015–5, at intervals not to exceed 50 hours TIS, visually inspect the strut aluminum end fittings for deformation or damage, dye-penetrant inspect the strut aluminum end fittings for a crack, and replace deformed, damaged, or cracked parts. Within 500 hours TIS or one year, whichever occurs first, modify or replace certain part-numbered strut assemblies.
- Within 100 hours TIS, for Model 269C helicopters, serialize each strut