

providing the degree of safety assurance necessary for the transport airplane fleet. This, coupled with a better understanding of the human factors associated with numerous continual inspections, has led the FAA to consider placing less emphasis on inspections and more emphasis on design improvements. The proposed requirement to accomplish the terminating action is in consonance with these considerations.

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 26 Airbus Model A310 series airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 15 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed inspections, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed inspection on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$23,400, or \$900 per airplane, per inspection cycle.

It would take approximately 8 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed replacement, at an average labor rate of \$60 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately \$16,872 per airplane. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed replacement on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$451,152, or \$17,352 per airplane.

The cost impact figures discussed above are based on assumptions that no operator has yet accomplished any of the proposed requirements of this AD action, and that no operator would accomplish those actions in the future if this AD were not adopted.

Regulatory Impact

The regulations proposed herein would not have substantial direct effects 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, in accordance with Executive Order 12612, it is determined that this proposal would not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify that this proposed regulation (1) is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866; (2) is not a "significant rule" under the DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979); and (3) if promulgated, will not have a significant economic impact, positive or negative, on a substantial number of small entities under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act. A copy of the draft

regulatory evaluation prepared for this action is contained in the Rules Docket. A copy of it may be obtained by contacting the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption **ADDRESSES**.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Safety.

The Proposed Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration proposes to amend part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) as follows:

PART 39—AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

2. Section 39.13 is amended by adding the following new airworthiness directive:

Airbus Industrie: Docket 96-NM-60-AD.

Applicability: Model A310 series airplanes, on which Airbus Modification 10962 has not been installed; certificated in any category.

Note 1: This AD applies to each airplane identified in the preceding applicability provision, regardless of whether it has been otherwise modified, altered, or repaired in the area subject to the requirements of this AD. For airplanes that have been modified, altered, or repaired so that the performance of the requirements of this AD is affected, the owner/operator must request approval for an alternative method of compliance in accordance with paragraph (c) of this AD. The request should include an assessment of the effect of the modification, alteration, or repair on the unsafe condition addressed by this AD; and, if the unsafe condition has not been eliminated, the request should include specific proposed actions to address it.

Compliance: Required as indicated, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent failure of the flap transmission shaft due to damaged steady bearing assemblies, which could cause an uncommanded asymmetric retraction of the flap, and result in reduced controllability of the airplane, accomplish the following:

(a) Prior to the accumulation of 2,000 total landings or within 500 flight hours after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later: Perform a visual inspection to detect damage or any discrepancy of the steady bearing assemblies of the flap transmission system, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A310-27-2067, Revision 1, dated January 5, 1995.

(1) If no damage or discrepancy is detected: Repeat the inspection thereafter at intervals not to exceed 2,000 landings, until the requirements of paragraph (b) of this AD are accomplished.

(2) If any damage or discrepancy is detected and the groove depth of the shaft is less than 1 mm (.04 inch): Prior to the accumulation of 50 landings after detection of this discrepancy, replace the steady bearing assembly with a new, like assembly in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A310-27-2067, Revision 1, dated January 5, 1995.

(3) If any damage or discrepancy is detected and the groove depth on the shaft is 1 mm or more: Prior to further flight, replace the steady bearing assembly with a new, like assembly, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A310-27-2067, Revision 1, dated January 5, 1995.

(b) Within 5 years after the effective date of this AD, replace all steady bearing assemblies of the flap transmission system with new, improved assemblies, in accordance with Airbus A310-27-2074, dated November 18, 1994. Accomplishment of the replacement constitutes terminating action for the requirements of this AD.

Note 2: Airbus Service Bulletin A310-27-2074 references Lucas Liebherr Service Bulletin 551A-27-M551-03 as an additional source of service information for replacement of the steady bearing assemblies with the new, improved assemblies.

(c) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used if approved by the Manager, Standardization Branch, ANM-113, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Standardization Branch, ANM-113.

Note 3: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Standardization Branch, ANM-113.

(d) Special flight permits may be issued in accordance with sections 21.197 and 21.199 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.197 and 21.199) to operate the airplane to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on January 7, 1997.

Darrell M. Pederson,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 97-813 Filed 1-13-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-U

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 96-NM-92-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Model A320 Series Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes the adoption of a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to certain Airbus Model A320 series airplanes. This proposal would require repetitive inspections to detect cracking and delamination of the containers in which the left and right off-wing emergency evacuation slides are stored, and repair, if necessary. If cracking and delamination in excess of certain limits are found, the proposed AD also would require replacement of the slide with a modified slide; and replacement of the discrepant container with a serviceable container. Replacement of the slide with a modified slide would terminate the requirement for repetitive inspections. This proposal is prompted by a report indicating that a slide deployed during flight, which resulted in the loss of the slide and the container door. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent the loss of the escape slides during flight, which could make the emergency exits located over each wing unusable and result in damage to the fuselage.

DATES: Comments must be received by February 24, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-103, Attention: Rules Docket No. 96-NM-92-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056. Comments may be inspected at this location between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

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: Charles Huber, Aerospace Engineer, Standardization Branch, ANM-113, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (206) 227-2589; fax (206) 227-1149.

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 notice 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 comments submitted in response to this notice must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket Number 96-NM-92-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-103, Attention: Rules Docket No. 96-NM-92-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

The Direction Generale de la Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, recently notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on certain Airbus Model A320 series airplanes. The DGAC advises that it has received a report indicating that the left off-wing emergency evacuation slide on one airplane inadvertently deployed during flight. A subsequent inspection revealed that both the left off-wing slide and the door to the container in which the slide was stored were missing. Based on the findings of the inspection, it was concluded that the loss of the slide and the container door were the result of the packed slide pressing against (and thereby exerting excessive internal pressure on) the container. This contact and resultant excessive pressure also contributed to delamination of the container door.

A slide is mounted on each side of the airplane in the wing-to-body fairing. Should the slide begin to deploy during flight, air moving over the wing can separate the slide from the airplane. This loss of the slide during flight could make the two emergency exits located over each wing unusable and result in damage to the fuselage.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

Airbus has issued Service Bulletin A320-25-1161, dated June 21, 1995, which describes procedures for conducting repetitive detailed visual inspections to detect cracking and delamination of the left and right slide containers and container doors, and repair, if necessary. When cracking and delamination of the container or container door exceed certain limits, this service bulletin also describes procedures for replacing a discrepant container with a serviceable container; and for replacing the slide with a modified slide. Accomplishment of the slide replacement would eliminate the need for repetitive inspections of that container and door.

Airbus also has issued Service Bulletin A320-25-1156, dated June 21, 1995, which describes procedures for the replacement of the slide with a modified slide. When the modified slide is packed into its container, there is a 5 mm clearance between the slide and the container door. This modification is intended to keep the packed slide from pressing against the container door, thus alleviating pressure on the door; the modification also would eliminate a cause of delamination of the container door.

The DGAC classified the Airbus service bulletins as mandatory and issued French airworthiness directive (C/N) 95-186-071(B) R1, dated February 14, 1996, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in France.

Note: The Airbus service bulletins reference the following service documents as additional sources of procedural service information:

- Airbus All Operator Telex 25-09, dated January 2, 1995;
 - Airbus All Operator Telex 25-09, Revision 1, dated January 2, 1995;
 - Air Cruisers Service Bulletin 004-25-37; and
 - Air Cruisers Service Bulletin 004-25-38.
- (Air Cruisers is the manufacturer of the slide system.)

FAA's Conclusions

This airplane model is manufactured in France and is 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 the FAA informed of the situation described above. The FAA has 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 Rule

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 require repetitive detailed visual inspections to detect cracking and delamination of the container and container door for the left and right escape slides, and repair, if necessary. If damage to the container door exceeds certain limits, the proposed AD would require replacement of the escape slide with a modified slide, and replacement of the discrepant container with a serviceable container. Accomplishment of the slide replacement would constitute terminating action for the repetitive inspections of the container and container door. The actions would be required to be accomplished in accordance with the Airbus service bulletins described previously.

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 115 Airbus Model 320 series airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD.

It would take approximately 5 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed inspection, at an average labor rate of \$60 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$34,500, or \$300 per airplane, per inspection.

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 accomplish those actions in the future if this AD were not adopted.

Regulatory Impact

The regulations proposed herein would not have substantial direct effects 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, in accordance with Executive Order 12612, it is determined that this proposal would not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify that this proposed regulation (1) is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866; (2) is not a "significant rule" under the DOT

Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979); and (3) if promulgated, will not have a significant economic impact, positive or negative, on a substantial number of small entities under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act. A copy of the draft regulatory evaluation prepared for this action is contained in the Rules Docket. A copy of it may be obtained by contacting the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption **ADDRESSES**.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Safety.

The Proposed Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration proposes to amend part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) as follows:

PART 39—AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

2. Section 39.13 is amended by adding the following new airworthiness directive:

Airbus Industrie: Docket 96-NM-92-AD.

Applicability: Model A320 series airplanes listed in Airbus Service Bulletin A320-25-1156, dated June 21, 1995; certificated in any category.

Note 1: This AD applies to each airplane identified in the preceding applicability provision, regardless of whether it has been otherwise modified, altered, or repaired in the area subject to the requirements of this AD. For airplanes that have been modified, altered, or repaired so that the performance of the requirements of this AD is affected, the owner/operator must request approval for an alternative method of compliance in accordance with paragraph (b) of this AD. The request should include an assessment of the effect of the modification, alteration, or repair on the unsafe condition addressed by this AD; and, if the unsafe condition has not been eliminated, the request should include specific proposed actions to address it.

Compliance: Required as indicated, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent the loss of the off-wing emergency evacuation slides ("escape slides") during flight, which could make the two emergency exits located over each wing unusable and result in damage to the airplane, accomplish the following:

(a) Within 500 hours time-in-service after the effective date of this AD, perform a detailed visual inspection to detect cracking and delamination of each off-wing container, including the container door, in which an

escape slide is stored, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320-25-1161, dated June 21, 1995.

Note 2: Accomplishment of inspections prior to the effective date of this AD in accordance with Airbus All Operator Telex 25-09, dated January 2, 1995, or Revision 1, dated January 2, 1995; or Air Cruisers Service Bulletin 004-25-38; is considered acceptable for compliance with this paragraph.

(1) If no crack or delamination is found, repeat the detailed visual inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD thereafter at intervals not to exceed 18 months or 4,000 landings, whichever occurs earlier.

(2) If any crack or delamination is found which does not exceed the limits specified in the service bulletin, prior to further flight, repair the crack or delamination in accordance with this service bulletin.

(3) If any crack or delamination is found which exceeds the limits specified in the, prior to further flight, replace the discrepant container with a serviceable container in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320-25-1161, dated June 21, 1995; and replace the escape slide with a slide modified in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320-25-1156, dated June 21, 1995. Replacement of the slide constitutes terminating action for the repetitive inspections of that container required by paragraph (a)(1) of this AD.

Note 3: Accomplishment of the slide modification prior to the effective date of this AD in accordance with Airbus All Operator Telex 25-09, dated January 2, 1995, or Revision 1, dated January 2, 1995; or Air Cruisers Service Bulletin 004-25-37; is considered acceptable for compliance with this paragraph.

(b) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used if approved by the Manager, Standardization Branch, ANM-113, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Standardization Branch, ANM-113.

Note 4: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Standardization Branch, ANM-113.

(c) Special flight permits may be issued in accordance with sections 21.197 and 21.199 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.197 and 21.199) to operate the airplane to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on January 7, 1997.

Darrell M. Pederson,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.
[FR Doc. 97-812 Filed 1-13-97; 8:45 am]

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