

Proposed Rules

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains notices to the public of the proposed issuance of rules and regulations. The purpose of these notices is to give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rule making prior to the adoption of the final rules.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97-NM-183-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Model A320 and A321 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 and A321 series airplanes. This proposal would require a revision to the Airplane Flight Manual (AFM) to include procedures for the flightcrew to follow in the event of radio altimeter height malfunction. This proposal also would require replacement of certain radio altimeter antennas with improved antennas, at which time the AFM revision would no longer be required. This proposal is prompted by issuance of mandatory continuing airworthiness information by a foreign civil airworthiness authority. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent output of erroneous radio altimeter height information to the flightcrew and autopilot, which could result in reduced ability of the flightcrew to cope with adverse operating conditions.

DATES: Comments must be received by October 27, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-103, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97-NM-183-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 (425) 227-2589; 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 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 97-NM-183-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. 97-NM-183-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

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 A320 and A321 series airplanes. The DGAC advises that it has received a report indicating that erroneous radio altimeter height information was provided to the flightcrew and to the autopilot on an Airbus Model A320 series airplane. This resulted in a premature autopilot engagement of the FLARE mode during approach, and other aural and visual flight deck indications associated with the radio altimeter height malfunction. Subsequent investigation revealed that a manufacturing flaw in the solder connection of the radio altimeter antenna caused the erroneous indications. This condition, if not corrected, could result in output of erroneous radio altimeter height information to the flightcrew and autopilot, which could result in reduced ability of the flightcrew to cope with adverse operating conditions.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

Airbus has issued All Operators Telex (AOT) 34-03, dated February 20, 1996, which describes procedures for replacement of a certain antenna of the radio altimeter with an improved antenna. This AOT states that the operational procedures described in Airbus Flight Operation Telex (FOT) 945.0968/96 must be applied as long as the affected antennas are installed. This FOT has been incorporated into Airbus A319/320/321 Flight Manual Temporary Revision (TR) 2.05.00/13 (not dated) which describes procedures for revising the Limitations Section of the Airplane Flight Manual (AFM) to provide procedures for the flightcrew to follow in the event of radio altimeter malfunction.

Accomplishment of the actions specified in this service information is intended to adequately address the identified unsafe condition. The DGAC classified the AOT as mandatory and issued French airworthiness directive (CN) 96-172-084(B), dated August 28, 1996, in order to assure 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 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 accomplishment of the actions specified in the service information described previously.

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 50 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 1 work hour per airplane to accomplish the proposed AFM revision, and 1 work hour per airplane to accomplish the proposed antenna replacement, at an average labor rate of \$60 per work hour. Required parts would be provided by the manufacturer at no cost to operators. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$6,000, or \$120 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 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: Docket 97–NM–183–AD.

Applicability: Model A320 and A321 series airplanes; equipped with Collins radio altimeter antennas having part number (P/N) 622–8701–002 and a serial number below 2014; 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 (d) 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 output of erroneous radio altimeter height information to the flightcrew and autopilot, due to inadequate antenna solder connections, which could result in reduced ability of the flightcrew to cope with adverse operating conditions, accomplish the following:

(a) Within 10 days after the effective date of this AD, revise the Limitations Section of the FAA-approved Airplane Flight Manual (AFM) by incorporating Airbus A319/320/321 Flight Manual Temporary Revision (TR) 2.05.00/13 (not dated) into the AFM to provide procedures for the flightcrew to follow in the event of radio altimeter malfunction.

(b) Within 6 months after the effective date of this AD, replace any COLLINS radio altimeter antenna having P/N 622–8701–002, a serial number below 2014, and white paint on the inner side of the C-sink hole, with a new antenna having the same P/N that is fitted with metallic C-sink inserts in its attaching holes; in accordance with Airbus All Operators Telex (AOT) 34–03, dated February 20, 1996. Accomplishment of the actions specified in this paragraph constitutes terminating action for the AFM revision required by paragraph (a) of this AD.

(c) As of the effective date of this AD, no person shall install a Collins radio altimeter antenna having P/N 622–8701–002 and a serial number below 2014, unless the antenna is fitted with metallic C-sink inserts in its attaching holes.

(d) 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 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Standardization Branch, ANM–113.

(e) 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.

Note 3: The subject of this AD is addressed in French airworthiness directive 96–172–084(B), dated August 28, 1996.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on September 25, 1997.

Darrell M. Pederson,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.
[FR Doc. 97–25976 Filed 9–30–97; 8:45 am]

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