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[FR Doc. 99-13305 Filed 5-25-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 99-SW-30-AD]

Airworthiness Directives; Bell Helicopter Textron, A Division of Textron Canada, Model 206L, L-1, L-3, and L-4 Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes the superseding of an existing airworthiness directive (AD) applicable to Bell Helicopter Textron, A Division of Textron Canada (BHTC) Model 206L, L-1, L-3, and L-4 helicopters. This action would require the same type of actions required by the existing AD. In addition, the proposal would require an increase in the Retirement Index Number (RIN) multiplier for the mast, a correction in the model number, and other nonsubstantive changes. This proposal is prompted by further tests and analyses that indicate the RIN multiplier for the Model 206L-4 needs to be increased and the discovery of other errors in the existing AD. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent fatigue failure of the mast or trunnion, which could result in loss of the main rotor system and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before July 26, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 99-SW-30-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137. 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 Bell Helicopter Textron, a Division of Textron Canada, 12,800 Rue de L-Avenir, Mirabel, Quebec, Canada J7J1R4, ATTN: Product Support Engineering Light Helicopters. This

information may be examined at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jurgen Priester, Aerospace Engineer, Rotorcraft Certification Office, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Fort Worth, Texas 76137, telephone (817) 222-5159, fax (817) 222-5959.

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, 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 No. 99-SW-30-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, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 99-SW-30-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

Discussion

On March 14, 1997, the FAA issued AD 97-07-07, Amendment 39-9981 (62 FR 16073). The AD required the creation of a component history card or equivalent record using the RIN system for certain masts and trunnions within the next 100 hours time-in-service (TIS) and a system for tracking increases to

the accumulated RIN. That AD also established a retirement life for the trunnion based solely on a RIN of 24,000 and a retirement life for the mast based on a maximum RIN of 44,000 or the flight-hour service life limit, whichever occurs first. That AD was prompted by fatigue analyses and tests that show certain masts and trunnions fail sooner than originally anticipated because of the unanticipated higher number of torque events performed with those masts and trunnions in addition to the TIS accrued under other operating conditions. That condition, if not corrected, could result in fatigue failure of the mast or trunnion, which could result in loss of the main rotor system and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

Since the issuance of that AD, the FAA has discovered that the AD contained errors in two paragraphs. Paragraph (c)(2) incorrectly requires the operator to increase the mast RIN count for the Model 206L-4 by 1, when it should actually be increased by 2, for each torque event. Paragraph (c)(1)(i) contains an omission of the letter "L" from one helicopter model number. This AD would correct paragraph (c)(2) to avoid a miscalculation of the mast RIN and to correctly identify the Model 206L. This AD would also add nonsubstantive changes to the text. Paragraphs (b) and (c) would state that the RIN may be recorded on an "equivalent record" in lieu of a component history card. Paragraph (d) and (e) would state that this AD revises the Limitations section of the maintenance manual.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc. has issued Alert Service Bulletin No. 206L-94-99, Revision A, dated May 1, 1995 (ASB), which describes procedures for calculating the retirement life based on the RIN count.

FAA's Conclusions

These helicopter models are manufactured in Canada 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, Transport Canada has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above. The FAA has examined the findings of Transport Canada, 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.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on BHTC Model 206L, L-1, L-3, and L-4 helicopters of the same type designs registered in the United States, the proposed AD would supersede AD 97-07-07 to prevent miscalculation of a RIN for Model 206L-4 main rotor masts. This AD would require creation of a component history card or equivalent record using a RIN system, establishing a system for tracking increases to the accumulated RIN, and a maximum accumulated RIN for masts and trunnions. The actions would be required to be accomplished in accordance with the ASB described previously.

The FAA estimates that 711 helicopters of U.S. registry would be affected by this AD, that it would take approximately (1) 8 work hours per helicopter to replace the mast and 10 work hours per helicopter to replace the trunnion due to the new method of determining the retirement life required by this AD; (2) 2 work hours per helicopter to create the component history card of equivalent record (record); (3) 10 work hours per helicopter to maintain the record each year, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately \$9,538 per mast and \$2,083 per trunnion. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the AD on U.S. operators for the first year is estimated to be \$2,016,989, and each subsequent year to be \$1,945,889. These costs assume replacement of the mast and trunnion in one-sixth of the fleet each year, creation and maintenance of the records for all the fleet the first year, and creation of one-sixth of the fleet's records and maintenance of the records for all the fleet each subsequent year. The estimated cost impact amounts are based on assumptions that no operator has yet accomplished any of the requirements of this AD action, and that no operator would accomplish those actions in the future if this AD were not adopted.

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, would 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 removing Amendment 39-9981, Docket No. 95-SW-36-AD (62 FR 16073, dated April 4, 1997) and by adding a new airworthiness directive (AD) to read as follows:

Bell Helicopter Textron, A Division of

Textron Canada: Docket No. 99-SW-30-AD. Supersedes AD 97-07-07, Amendment 39-9981, Docket 95-SW-36-AD.

Applicability: Model 206L, 206L-1, 206L-3, and 206L-4 helicopters, with main rotor mast (mast), part number (P/N) 206-040-535-001, -005, -101, or -105, installed, or main rotor trunnion (trunnion), P/N 206-011-120-103, installed, certificated in any category.

Note 1: This AD applies to each helicopter identified in the preceding applicability provision, regardless of whether it has been modified, altered, or repaired in the area subject to the requirements of this AD. For helicopters 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 (f) 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 within 100 hours time-in-service, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent fatigue failure of the mast or trunnion, which could result in loss of the main rotor system and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter, accomplish the following:

(a) Create a component history card or an equivalent record for the affected mast and trunnion.

(b) Determine the accumulated Retirement Index Number (RIN) to date based on the number of takeoffs and external load lifts (torque events) for parts in service in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Accomplishment Instructions of Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc. Alert Service Bulletin No. 206L-94-99, Revision A, dated May 1, 1995 (ASB). Record this accumulated RIN on the component history card or equivalent record.

(c) After complying with paragraphs (a) and (b) of this AD, during each operation thereafter, maintain a count of the number of external load lifts and the number of takeoffs performed and at the end of each day's operations, increase the accumulated RIN on the component history card or equivalent record as follows:

(1) For the trunnion,

(i) Increase the RIN for the Model 206L, 206L-1, and 206L-3 helicopters by 1 for each torque event.

(ii) Increase the RIN for the Model 206L-4 helicopters by 2 for each torque event.

(2) For the mast,

(i) Increase the RIN for the Model 206L, 206L-1, 206L-3 helicopters by 1 for each torque event.

(ii) Increase the RIN for the Model 206L-4 helicopters by 2 for each torque event.

Note 2: Previous Model 206L-4 mast RIN calculations may have increased the RIN by only 1 for each torque event. This AD increases the Model 206L-4 mast RIN by 2 for each torque event.

(d) Remove the trunnion from service on or before attaining the maximum accumulated RIN (24,000) in accordance with Table 1 of the Accomplishment Instructions of the ASB. This AD revises the Limitations section of the maintenance manual by establishing a retirement life of 24,000 RIN for the trunnion.

(e) Remove the mast from service on or before attaining the maximum accumulated RIN (44,000) or the flight hour service life limit, whichever occurs first, in accordance with Table 2 of the Accomplishment Instructions the ASB. This AD revises the Limitations section of the maintenance manual by establishing a retirement life of 44,000 RIN for the mast.

(f) 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, Rotorcraft Certification Office, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Rotorcraft Certification Office.

Note 3: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be

obtained from the Rotorcraft Certification Office.

(g) 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 helicopter to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on May 18, 1999.

Mark R. Schilling,

*Acting Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate,
Aircraft Certification Service.*

[FR Doc. 99-13318 Filed 5-25-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 98-SW-73-AD]

Airworthiness Directives; Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc. Model 204B, 205A, and 205A-1 Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes the superseding of an existing airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc. (BHTI) Model 204B, 205A, and 205A-1 helicopters, that currently requires modification and inspections of the vertical fin spar for cracks. This action would require modification and visual and dye-penetrant inspections of the vertical fin spar for cracks, and if a crack is discovered, replacing the vertical fin spar. This action would also require a tapping test for disbonding and replacing certain fin spars within 12 calendar months. This proposal is prompted by an accident involving a Model 205A-1 helicopter and 4 other accidents involving helicopters of similar type design. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent failure of the vertical fin spar, loss of the tail rotor, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before July 26, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 98-SW-73-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137. 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 Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc., P.O. Box 482, Fort Worth, Texas 76101, telephone (817) 280-3391, fax (817) 280-6466. This information may be examined at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Harry Edmiston, Aerospace Engineer, Rotorcraft Certification Office, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Fort Worth, Texas 76137, telephone (817) 222-5158, fax (817) 222-5783.

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, 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 No. 98-SW-73-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, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 98-SW-73-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

Discussion:

On May 4, 1998, the FAA issued AD 97-18-11, Amendment 39-10520 (63 FR 26429, May 13, 1998), to require modifying and inspecting the vertical fin spar, and replacing it if a crack is found. That action was prompted by several failures of the vertical fin spar, including those with steel doublers, caused by fatigue cracks that result from a large number of high-power events. The requirements of that AD are intended to prevent failure of the vertical fin spar and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

Since the issuance of that AD, there have been 4 additional accidents involving models similar in type design to the Model 205A-1 helicopter that were caused by fatigue failure of the vertical fin spar. The manufacturer has issued BHTI Alert Service Bulletin (ASB) 205-98-71, Revision A, dated September 21, 1998, which specifies inspections of the vertical fin spar for cracks, and BHTI ASB No. 205-98-73, dated September 25, 1998, which specifies replacing the vertical fin spar assembly, part number (P/N) 205-030-899-101, 205-030-846-087 or -089, and P/N 205-032-851-003, -007, and -009, for the Model 205A and 205A-1 helicopters. Also, the manufacturer has issued BHTI ASB No. 204B-98-50, dated October 22, 1998, which specifies inspections of the fin spar for cracks, and replacing the fin spar assembly, P/N 205-030-846-001, -003, -047, -049, and P/N 205-030-899-001, -089, and P/N 204-030-825-063, -065. The FAA has further determined that the vertical fin spar must be replaced within 12 calendar months to ensure public safety.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other Model 204B, 205A, and 205A-1 helicopters of the same type design, the proposed AD would supersede AD 97-18-11 to require initial and repetitive inspections of the vertical fin spar for cracks. Also, replacing the vertical fin spar would be required within 12 calendar months. Replacing the vertical fin spar with a FAA-approved vertical fin spar configuration that satisfies the structural fatigue requirement of repeated high torque events would constitute a terminating action for the requirements of this AD.

The FAA estimates that 150 helicopters of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 8 work hours per helicopter to accomplish the initial inspection and 0.5 work hour to accomplish each repetitive inspection. Replacing the vertical fin spar would