

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 777-57A0029, dated December 22, 1998, which describes procedures for the replacement of fuse pins in the attachment fittings and support fittings of the main landing gear with new, improved fuse pins made of a more corrosion resistant material. Accomplishment of the actions specified in the alert 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 alert service bulletin described previously.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 163 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 34 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take between 5 and 39 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed replacement, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Required parts would cost between \$3,090 and \$8,710 per airplane. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be between \$3,390 and \$11,050 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:

Boeing: Docket 99-NM-58-AD.

Applicability: Model 777 series airplanes, as listed in Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 777-57A0029, dated December 22, 1998; certificated in any category.

Note 1: This AD applies to each airplane 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 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 corrosion and subsequent fracture of the fuse pins in the main landing gear attachment and support fittings, which could result in collapse of the main landing gear and the loss of the inboard flap and outboard spoilers, accomplish the following:

Replacement

(a) Within 48 months since date of manufacture, or 18 months after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later, replace the main landing gear fuse pins with

new, improved fuse pins in accordance with Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 777-57A0029, dated December 22, 1998.

Spares

(b) As of the effective date of this AD, no person shall install a main landing gear fuse pin having part number 112W1728-1, 112W1728-3, or 115W1670-1 on any airplane.

Alternative Methods of Compliance

(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, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), 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, Seattle ACO.

Note 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Seattle ACO.

Special Flight Permits

(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 August 16, 1999.

D.L. Riggins,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 99-21688 Filed 8-19-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-U

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 99-NM-81-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 737-100, -200, -200C, -300, -400, and -500 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 all Boeing Model 737-100, -200, -200C, -300, -400, and -500 series airplanes. This proposal would require repetitive inspections to detect cracking of the lower corners of the door frame and cross beam of the forward cargo door, and corrective actions, if necessary. This proposal also would require eventual modification of the outboard radius of

the lower corners of the door frame and reinforcement of the cross beam of the forward cargo door, which would constitute terminating action for the repetitive inspections. This proposal is prompted by reports indicating that fatigue cracks have been detected in the lower corners of the door frame and cross beam of the forward cargo door. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent fatigue cracking of the lower corners of the door frame and cross beam of the forward cargo door, which could result in rapid depressurization of the airplane.

DATES: Comments must be received by October 4, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 99-NM-81-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 Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, P.O. Box 3707, Seattle, Washington 98134-2207. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rick Kawaguchi, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120S, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 227-1153; fax (425) 227-1181.

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 99-NM-81-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. 99-NM-81-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

The FAA has received several reports indicating that fatigue cracks have been detected in the lower corners of the door frame and cross beam of the forward cargo door on Boeing Model 737-100, -200, -200C, -300, -400, and -500 series airplanes. Such fatigue cracking results from cabin pressurization cycles. The sizes of the cracks ranged from 3/8 inch to 17.5 inches in length, and were found on airplanes that had accumulated between 13,500 and 53,100 total flight hours and between 15,700 and 49,800 total flight cycles.

The manufacturer subsequently redesigned the door frame of the forward cargo door to be less susceptible to fatigue cracking. However, investigation has revealed that such cracking has been detected on airplanes equipped with the redesigned door frame of the forward cargo door. Recently, two operators reported finding cracks on the lower corner radius of the aft door frame of the forward cargo door. The first operator reported finding a 10-inch crack on the aft door frame and an undisclosed sized crack on the cross beam on an airplane that had accumulated 23,000 total flight cycles. The second operator reported finding a 14.5-inch crack on the aft door frame and an undisclosed sized crack on the cross beam on an airplane that had accumulated 29,000 total flight cycles. Such cracking, if not detected and corrected, could result in rapid depressurization of the airplane.

Other Relevant Rulemaking

The FAA previously has issued AD 90-06-02, amendment 39-6489 (55 FR 8372, March 7, 1990), applicable to certain Boeing Model 737 series airplanes. AD 90-06-02 requires

accomplishment of certain structural modifications. That amendment was prompted by reports of incidents involving fatigue cracking and corrosion in transport category airplanes that are approaching or have exceeded their design life goal. For airplanes that have those modifications installed, this proposed AD would require additional modifications of the aft lower corner of the door frame of the forward cargo door.

Additionally, the FAA has issued AD 98-25-06, amendment 39-10931 (55 FR 67769, December 9, 1998), applicable to certain Boeing Model 737-200, -200C, -300, and -400 series airplanes. AD 98-25-06 requires repetitive inspections to detect cracking of the corners of the door frame and the cross beams of the aft cargo door, and corrective actions, if necessary. This proposed AD would not affect the requirements of that AD.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing 737 Nondestructive Test Manual, Part 6, Section 51-00-00, Figure 4 and Figure 23, which describes procedures for performing high frequency eddy current inspections.

The FAA has also reviewed and approved Boeing Service Bulletin 737-52-1100, Revision 2, dated March 31, 1994, which describes procedures for, among other things, repetitive close visual inspections to detect cracking of the lower corners (forward and aft) of the door frame and cross beam (i.e., upper and lower chord and web sections) of the forward cargo door, and corrective actions, if necessary. The corrective actions involve replacement of the damaged door frame of the forward cargo door with a new door frame and reinforcement modification of the upper chord and web sections of the cross beam of the forward cargo door. The corrective actions also involve installation of a cross beam repair (if necessary), and preventative modification of the outboard radius of the lower corners of the door frame. This modification involves installing a reinforcement angle along the full length of the lower corners (forward and aft) over the outboard radius of the lower end of the door frame. For certain airplanes, installation of the preventative modification of the outboard radius of the lower corner of the door frame and reinforcement of the cross beam of the forward cargo door will eliminate the need for the repetitive inspections.

Accomplishment of the actions specified in the service documents 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 documents described previously, except as discussed below.

Differences Between Proposed Rule and Service Bulletin

- Operators should note that, whereas the Boeing service bulletin specifies close visual inspections only, this proposed AD would require a high frequency eddy current inspection to detect cracking of the door frame and a detailed visual inspection to detect cracking of the cross beam of the forward cargo door. The FAA has determined that, because of the safety implications and consequences associated with such fatigue cracking, close visual inspection methods alone may be inadequate in detecting cracks.

- While the Boeing service bulletin does not provide corrective actions for cracking detected on the lower chord of the cross beam, this proposed AD would require that the repair of the lower chord of the cross beam be accomplished in accordance with a method approved by the FAA.

- Operators should further note that, unlike the procedures described in the Boeing service bulletin, this proposed AD would not permit the alternative of replacing the door frame of the forward cargo door in the event that cracks are detected on the cross beam. This proposed AD would require installation of a cross beam repair (if necessary) and preventative modification of the outboard radius of the lower corners (forward and aft) of the door frame, and installation of a reinforcement modification of the cross beam of the forward cargo door. Additionally, this proposed AD would require additional actions in the event that cracks are detected in the door frame of the forward cargo door. This proposed AD would require replacement of the door frame with a new door frame, reinforcement of the cross beam, and installation of the preventative modification of the outboard radius of the lower corners of the door frame. The FAA finds that, in view of the reports that cracking has occurred on the redesigned door frames, and because of the safety implications and consequences associated with such cracking, replacing the door frame

without further modification will not safely address the unsafe condition.

- This AD also proposes to mandate, within 4 years, the preventative modification of the outboard radius of the lower corners (forward and aft) of the door frame and the reinforcement modification of the cross beam of the forward cargo door as described in the Boeing service bulletin (previously described). The modification would be accomplished, for certain airplanes, in accordance with the Boeing service bulletin and for certain other airplanes, in accordance with a method approved by the FAA, and would eliminate the need for the repetitive inspections.

The FAA has determined that long-term continued operational safety will be better assured by design changes to remove the source of the problem, rather than by repetitive inspections. Long-term inspections may not be 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 modification requirements are in consonance with these conditions.

- The effectivity of the Boeing service bulletin includes Boeing Model 737 series airplanes having line numbers 0001 through 1231 inclusive. This proposed AD would be applicable to Boeing Model 737 series airplanes having line numbers 0001 through 1231 inclusive, and also would include Boeing Model 737 series airplanes having line numbers 1232 and on. The FAA is aware that a design change to the door frame of the forward cargo door was implemented on the production line at line number 1232. The FAA finds that, in view of the reports indicating that cracking has occurred on airplanes having later line numbers (1251 and 1790) with the change incorporated, the applicability specified in this proposed AD is appropriate.

- Further, operators should note that, although the Boeing service bulletin recommends that the initial inspection be performed within 4,500 flight cycles after an airplane has accumulated 12,000 total flight cycles, this proposed AD would require that the initial inspection be performed within 1 year or 4,500 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later. The FAA has determined that the number of total flight cycles for an airplane may not be a good indicator of the total cycle count for the subject forward cargo door, because a door may have been removed from an airplane

that had accumulated many total flight cycles and reinstalled on an airplane that had accumulated relatively fewer total flight cycles. Due to the limited ability to accurately track the total flight cycles of the subject forward cargo door, the initial compliance time specified by this proposed AD is appropriate.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 3,100 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 1,400 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 inspections, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the inspections proposed by this AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$84,000, or \$60 per airplane, per inspection cycle.

It would take approximately 38 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed terminating modifications at an average labor rate of \$60 per work hour. Required parts would cost \$1,865 per airplane. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the terminating modifications proposed by this AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$5,803,000, or \$4,145 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:

Boeing: Docket 99–NM–81–AD.

Applicability: All Model 737–100, –200, –200C, –300, –400, and –500 series airplanes; certificated in any category.

Note 1: This AD applies to each airplane 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 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 (e) 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 fatigue cracking of the lower corners of the door frame and cross beam of the forward cargo door, which could result in rapid depressurization of the airplane, accomplish the following:

High Frequency Eddy Current Initial/Repetitive Inspections

(a) Within 1 year or 4,500 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later, perform a high frequency eddy current (HFEC) inspection to detect cracking of the lower corners (forward and aft) of the door frame of the forward cargo door in accordance with Boeing 737 Nondestructive Test Manual, Part 6, Section 51–00–00, Figure 4 or Figure 23.

(1) If no cracking is detected, repeat the HFEC inspection thereafter at intervals not to exceed 4,500 flight cycles, until the requirements of paragraph (c) of this AD have been accomplished.

(2) If any cracking is detected during any inspection required by paragraph (a) of this

AD, prior to further flight, accomplish the requirements of paragraphs (a)(2)(i) and (a)(2)(ii) of this AD, which constitute terminating action for the repetitive inspections required by paragraph (a)(1) of this AD.

(i) Replace the door frame of the forward cargo door with a new door frame; install a cross beam repair and reinforcement modification of the cross beam in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 737–52–1100, Revision 2, dated March 31, 1994; and

(ii) Modify the replacement door frame of the forward cargo door in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate or in accordance with data meeting the type certification basis of the airplane approved by a Boeing Company Designated Engineering Representative who has been authorized by the Manager, Seattle ACO, to make such findings. For a repair or modification method to be approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO, as required by this paragraph and paragraphs (b)(2), (b)(3)(ii), and (c)(2), the Manager's approval letter must specifically reference this AD.

Detailed Visual Initial/Repetitive Inspections

(b) Within 1 year or 4,500 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later, perform a detailed visual inspection to detect cracking of the cross beam (i.e., upper and lower chord and web sections) of the forward cargo door in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 737–52–1100, Revision 2, dated March 31, 1994.

Note 2: For the purposes of this AD, a detailed inspection is defined as: "An intensive visual examination of a specific structural area, system, installation or assembly to detect damage, failure or irregularity. Available lighting is normally supplemented with a direct source of good lighting at intensity deemed appropriate by the inspector. Inspection aids such as mirror, magnifying lenses, etc. may be used. Surface cleaning and elaborate access procedures may be required."

(1) If no cracking is detected, repeat the inspection thereafter at intervals not to exceed 4,500 flight cycles until the requirements of paragraph (c) of this AD have been accomplished.

(2) If any cracking is detected on the lower chord section of the cross beam during any inspection required by paragraph (b) of this AD, prior to further flight, repair in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO, or in accordance with data meeting the type certification basis of the airplane approved by a Boeing Company Designated Engineering Representative who has been authorized by the Manager, Seattle ACO, to make such findings.

(3) If any cracking is detected on any area excluding the lower chord section of the cross beam (i.e., upper chord and web section) during any inspection required by paragraph (b) of this AD, prior to further flight, accomplish the requirements of paragraph (b)(3)(i) or (b)(3)(ii), as applicable, of this AD, which constitute terminating action for the repetitive inspections required by paragraph (b)(1) of this AD.

(i) For airplanes with line numbers 1 through 1231: Install a cross beam repair and preventative modification of the outboard radius of the lower corners (forward and aft) of the door frame in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 737–52–1100, Revision 2, dated March 31, 1994.

Note 3: Due to implications and consequences associated with cracking, this AD does not allow the option of replacing the door frame as an alternative method of compliance to installing the preventative modification.

(ii) For airplanes with line numbers 1232 and subsequent: Install a cross beam repair and preventative modification of the outboard radius of the lower corners (forward and aft) of the door frame in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO or in accordance with data meeting the type certification basis of the airplane approved by a Boeing Company Designated Engineering Representative who has been authorized by the Manager, Seattle ACO, to make such findings.

Terminating Action

(c) Within 4 years after the effective date of this AD: Install the preventative modification of the outboard radius of the lower corners (forward and aft) of the door frame and the reinforcement modification of the cross beam of the forward cargo door in accordance with paragraph (c)(1) or (c)(2) of this AD, as applicable. Accomplishment of paragraph (c)(1) or (c)(2) of this AD, as applicable, constitutes terminating action for the repetitive inspections required by paragraphs (a)(1) and (b)(1) of this AD.

(1) For airplanes with line numbers 1 through 1231: Accomplish the preventative modification and the reinforcement modification in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 737–52–1100, Revision 2, dated March 31, 1994.

(2) For airplanes with line numbers 1232 and subsequent: Accomplish the preventative modification and the reinforcement modification in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO or in accordance with data meeting the type certification basis of the airplane approved by a Boeing Company Designated Engineering Representative who has been authorized by the Manager, Seattle ACO, to make such findings.

Modifications Previously Accomplished

(d) For all airplanes on which modifications of the forward lower corner of the door frame and the cross beam of the forward cargo door were accomplished in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 737–52–1100, dated August 25, 1988, or Revision 1, dated July 20, 1989, or in accordance with the requirements of AD 90–06–02, amendment 39–6489: Within 4 years after the effective date of this AD, install the reinforcement modification of the aft corner of the door frame of the forward cargo door in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 737–52–1100, Revision 2, dated March 31, 1994. Accomplishment of such modification constitutes terminating action for the repetitive inspections required by this AD.

Note 4: Accomplishment of Boeing Service Bulletin 737-52-1100, Revision 2, dated March 31, 1994, does not supersede the requirements of AD 90-06-02, amendment 39-6489.

Alternative Methods of Compliance

(e) 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, Seattle ACO. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Seattle ACO.

Note 5: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Seattle ACO.

Special Flight Permits

(f) Special flight permits may be issued in accordance with §§ 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 August 16, 1999.

D. L. Riggan,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 99-21687 Filed 8-19-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 99-NM-88-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 747-100 and -200 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 Boeing Model 747-100 and -200 series airplanes. This proposal would require repetitive inspections of the upper and lower chords of the wing front spar for cracks, and corrective action, if necessary. For airplanes on which no cracking is detected, this proposal would also provide optional terminating action in lieu of repetitive inspections. This proposal is prompted by reports of cracks in the upper chord of the wing front spar. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to detect and correct fatigue

cracking of the upper and lower chords of the wing front spar, which could result in reduced structural capability and possible fuel leakage onto an engine and a resultant fire.

DATES: Comments must be received by October 4, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 99-NM-88-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 Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, P.O. Box 3707, Seattle, Washington 98124-2207. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tamara L. Anderson, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120S, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (425) 227-2771; fax (425) 227-1181.

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 99-NM-88-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. 99-NM-88-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

The FAA has received reports of cracks in the upper chord of the wing front spar at the fastener holes in the area of the number 2 and number 3 strut outboard upper link fitting. The cracks are believed to initiate by fatigue on the forward surface of the chord and propagate into the thickness of the part. The lower chord of the wing front spar is similar in design to the upper chord; therefore, the lower chord may be subject to the same unsafe condition. This condition, if not corrected, could result in reduced structural capability and possible fuel leakage onto an engine and resultant fire.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Service Bulletin 747-57-2305, Revision 1, dated January 21, 1999, which describes procedures for repetitive ultrasonic inspections of the upper and lower chords of the wing front spar for cracks, and corrective action, if necessary. The corrective action involves accomplishment of a terminating action that includes a high frequency eddy current inspection of the upper and lower chords of the spar, repair of cracks, and installation of oversized fasteners. For airplanes on which cracking is not detected, accomplishment of the terminating action is optional, and eliminates the need for the repetitive inspections.

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. This proposed AD also would provide optional terminating action for the repetitive inspections for airplanes on which no cracking is detected.

Operators should note that the FAA has determined that the repetitive inspections proposed by this AD can be