Compliance: Required as indicated in the body of this AD, unless already accomplished.

To detect possible compression cracks and other damage in the wood spar wing, which, if not corrected, could eventually result in in-flight structural failure of the wing with consequent loss of the airplane, accomplish the following:

(a) Within the next 3 calendar months after the effective date of this AD, accomplish the following:

(1) Install inspection holes in the top and/or bottom surface of each wing in accordance with American Champion Aircraft Corporation (ACAC) Service Letter 417, Revision B, dated February 10, 1998. No further action is required by this paragraph (paragraph (a)(1) of this AD) if inspection holes are installed in accordance with ACAC Service Letter 417, Revision A, dated October 2, 1997; or ACAC Service Letter 417, dated August 14, 1997.

(2) Inspect (detailed visual) both the front and rear wood wing spars for cracks; compression cracks; longitudinal cracks through the bolt holes or nail holes; and loose or missing nails (referred to as damage hereon). Accomplish these inspections in accordance with ACAC Service Letter 406, dated March 28, 1994.

(3) If any spar damage is found, prior to further flight, accomplish the following:

(i) Repair or replace the wood wing spar in accordance with Advisory Circular (AC) 43–13–1A, Acceptable Methods, Techniques and Practices; or other data that is approved by the FAA for wing spar repair or replacement.

(ii) If the wing is recovered, accomplish the installations required by paragraph (a)(1) of this AD, as applicable.

(4) Install inspection hole covers or fabric patches, as required, on the top and bottom surface of the wing in accordance with ACAC Service Letter 417, Revision B, dated February 10, 1998. No further action is required by this paragraph (paragraph (a)(4) of this AD) if inspection hole covers are installed in accordance with ACAC Service Letter 417, Revision A, dated October 2, 1997; or ACAC Service Letter 417, dated August 14, 1997.

(b) Within 12 calendar months or 500 hours time-in-service (TIS) (whichever occurs first) after accomplishing all actions required by paragraph (a), all subparagraphs included, of this AD, and thereafter at intervals not to exceed 12 calendar months or 500 hours TIS, whichever occurs first, accomplish the inspection, repair, replacement, and installation required by paragraphs (a)(2), (a)(3), as applicable; including its subparagraphs; and (a)(4) of this AD.

Note 2: The affected airplanes are not certificated for aerobatic maneuvers. AD 87–18–09 required a placard prohibiting aerobatic maneuvers in addition to the existing operational placard. The FAA encourages owners/operators of the affected airplanes to keep this placard installed on their airplanes.

(c) If any of the affected airplanes are involved in an incident or accident involving wing damage after the effective date of this AD, prior to further flight, accomplish the inspection, repair, replacement, and installation required by paragraphs (a)(2), (a)(3), as applicable; including its subparagraphs; and (a)(4) of this AD.

(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.

(e) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the initial or repetitive compliance time that provides an equivalent level of safety may be approved by the Manager, Chicago Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), 2300 E. Devon Avenue, Des Plaines, Illinois 60018.

(1) The request shall be forwarded through an appropriate FAA Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Chicago ACO.

(2) Alternative methods of compliance approved in accordance with AD 87–18–09 (superseded by this action) are not considered approved as alternative methods of compliance for this AD.

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

(f) The installation required by this AD shall be done in accordance with American Champion Aircraft Corp. Service Letter 417, Revision B, dated February 10, 1998; American Champion Aircraft Corp. Service Letter 417, Revision A, dated October 2, 1997; or American Champion Aircraft Corp. Service Letter 417, dated August 14, 1997. The inspections required by this AD shall be done in accordance with American Champion Aircraft Corp. Service Letter 406, dated March 28, 1994. This incorporation by reference was approved by the Director of the Federal Register in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51. Copies may be obtained from the American Champion Aircraft Corp., P.O. Box 37, 32032 Washington Avenue, Highway D, Rochester, Wisconsin 53167. Copies may be inspected at the FAA, Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri, or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW, suite 700, Washington, DC.

(g) This amendment (39–10365) supersedes AD 87–18–09, Amendment 39–5725.

(h) This amendment (39–10365) becomes effective on April 17, 1998.

Issued in Kansas City, Missouri, on February 23, 1998.

Marvin R. Nuss,

Acting Manager, Small Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 98–5198 Filed 3–2–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97–CE–98–AD; Amendment 39–10367; AD 98–05–06]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Pilatus Aircraft Ltd. Model PC–12 Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Direct final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that applies to certain Pilatus Aircraft Ltd. (Pilatus) Model PC–12 airplanes. This AD requires inspecting the elevator for incorrect rivet lengths and installing new rivets if incorrect rivet lengths are found. This AD also requires inspecting the elevator to assure that an excessive gap (more than .004 inches or .1 millimeters (mm)) does not exist in the rivet shanks, and installing a shim between the rib and skin to fill any excessive gap. This AD is the result of mandatory continuing airworthiness information (MCAI) issued by the airworthiness authority for Switzerland. The actions specified in this AD are intended to prevent fatigue damage to the elevator, which could result in structural failure and eventual loss of control of the airplane.

DATES: Effective May 29, 1998.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of May 29, 1998.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before April 3, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97–CE–98–AD, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

Service information that applies to this AD may be obtained from Pilatus Aircraft Ltd., Marketing Support Department, CH–6370 Stans, Switzerland; telephone: +41 41–6196 233; facsimile: +41 41–6103 351. This information may also be examined at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97–CE–98–AD, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106; or at the Office of the Federal

Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Roman T. Gabrys, Aerospace Engineer, Small Airplane Directorate, Airplane Certification Service, FAA, 1201 Walnut, suite 900, Kansas City, Missouri 64106; telephone: (816) 426–6932; facsimile: (816) 426–2169.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Events Leading to the Issuance of This AD

The Federal Office for Civil Aviation (FOCA), which is the airworthiness authority for Switzerland, recently notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on certain Pilatus PC–12 airplanes. The FOCA reports that the following problems could have occurred during assembly of the above-referenced airplanes:

—Rivets installed with an incorrect length; and

—An excessive gap (more than .004 inches or .1 mm) exists in the rivet shanks.

These conditions, if not corrected in a timely manner, could result in fatigue damage to the elevator, leading to structural failure and eventual loss of control of the airplane.

Relevant Service Information

Pilatus has issued Service Bulletin No. 55–001, dated November 8, 1996, which specifies procedures for inspecting the elevator for incorrect rivet lengths and installing new rivets if incorrect rivet lengths are found. This service bulletin also includes procedures for inspecting the elevator to assure that a gap that is more than .004 inches or .1 mm does not exist in the rivet shanks, and installing a shim between the rib and skin to fill any excessive gap.

The FOCA classified this service bulletin as mandatory and issued Swiss AD HB 96–535A, dated November 30, 1996, corrected January 28, 1998, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in Switzerland.

The FAA's Determination

This airplane model is manufactured in Switzerland 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 FOCA has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above.

The FAA has examined the findings of the FOCA; reviewed all available information, including the service information referenced above; and determined that AD action is necessary for products of this type design that are certificated for operation in the United States.

Explanation of the Provisions of This AD

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop in other Pilatus PC–12 airplanes of the same type design registered in the United States, the FAA is issuing an AD. This AD requires inspecting the elevator for incorrect rivet lengths and installing new rivets if incorrect rivet lengths are found. This AD also requires inspecting the elevator to assure that an excessive gap (more than .004 inches or .1 millimeters (mm)) does not exist in the rivet shanks, and installing a shim between the rib and skin to fill any excessive gap. Accomplishment of the actions of this AD is required in accordance with the previously referenced service bulletin.

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 23 airplanes in the U.S. registry will be affected by this AD, that it will take approximately 12 workhours per airplane to accomplish the required action, and that the average labor rate is approximately $60 per work hour. Parts will be provided by the manufacturer at no charge to the owners/operators of the affected airplanes. Based on these figures, the cost impact of this AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be $16,560, or $720 per airplane.

Credit for up to 12 workhours of labor is available through the Pilatus PC–12 New Aircraft Warranty System. If utilized by all owners/operators of the affected airplanes, the cost impact of this AD would be eliminated.

The Direct Final Rule Procedure

The FAA anticipates that this regulation will not result in adverse or negative comment and therefore is issuing it as a direct final rule. The requirements of this direct final rule address an unsafe condition identified by a foreign civil airworthiness authority and do not impose a significant burden on affected operators. In accordance with section 11.17 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 11.17), unless a written adverse or negative comment, or a written notice of intent to submit an adverse or negative comment, is received within the comment period, the regulation will become effective on the date specified above. After the close of the comment period, the FAA will publish a document in the **Federal Register** indicating that no adverse or negative comments were received and confirming the date on which the final rule will become effective. If the FAA does receive, within the comment period, a written adverse or negative comment, or written notice of intent to submit such a comment, a document withdrawing the direct final rule will be published in the **Federal Register**, and a notice of proposed rulemaking may be published with a new comment period.

Comments Invited

Although this action is in the form of a final rule and was not preceded by notice and an opportunity for public comment, comments are invited on this rule. Interested persons are invited to comment on this 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 under the caption **ADDRESSES**. All communications received on or before the closing date for comments will be considered, and this rule may be amended in light of the comments received. Factual information that supports the commenter's ideas and suggestions is extremely helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of the AD action and determining whether additional rulemaking action would be needed.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the rule that might suggest a need to modify the 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 that summarizes each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this AD will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their comments submitted in response to this rule must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: ''Comments to Docket No. 97–CE–98–AD.'' The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

Regulatory Impact

The regulations adopted herein will 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 final rule does not have sufficient federalism

implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

The FAA has determined that this regulation is noncontroversial and unlikely to result in adverse or negative comments. For reasons discussed in the preamble, I certify that this regulation (1) is not a ''significant regulatory action'' under Executive Order 12866; (2) is not a ''significant rule'' under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979); and (3) 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 final evaluation has been prepared for this action and is contained in the Rules Docket. A copy of it may be obtained from the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption **ADDRESSES**.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

Adoption of the Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration amends 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 a new airworthiness directive (AD) to read as follows:

98–05–06 Pilatus Aircraft Ltd: Amendment 39–10367; Docket No. 97–CE–98–AD.

Applicability: Model PC–12 airplanes, manufacturer's serial numbers (MSN) 101, 105, 106, 107, 109 through 112, 114, 115, 117 through 120, 122 through 125, 129, 131 through 140, 142, and 146; 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 (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 in the body of this AD, unless already accomplished.

To prevent fatigue damage to the elevator, which could result in structural failure and eventual loss of control of the airplane, accomplish the following:

(a) Within the next 200 hours time-in-service (TIS) after the effective date of this AD, inspect the elevator for incorrect rivet lengths in accordance with the ACCOMPLISHMENT INSTRUCTIONS section of Pilatus Service Bulletin No. 55–001, dated November 8, 1996. Prior to further flight, install new rivets if incorrect rivet lengths are found in accordance with the above-referenced service bulletin.

(b) Within the next 200 hours TIS after the effective date of this AD, inspect the elevator to assure that an excessive gap (more than .004 inches or .1 millimeters (mm)) does not exist in the rivet shanks in accordance with the ACCOMPLISHMENT INSTRUCTIONS section of Pilatus Service Bulletin No. 55–001, dated November 8, 1996. Prior to further flight, install a shim between the rib and skin to fill any excessive gap in accordance with the above-referenced service bulletin.

(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.

(d) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an equivalent level of safety may be used if approved by the Manager, Small Airplane Directorate, 1201 Walnut, suite 900, Kansas City, Missouri 64106. The request shall be forwarded through an appropriate FAA Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Small Airplane Directorate.

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

(e) Questions or technical information related to Pilatus Service Bulletin No. 55–001, dated November 8, 1996, should be directed to Pilatus Aircraft Ltd., Marketing Support Department, CH–6370 Stans, Switzerland; telephone: +41 41–6196 233; facsimile: +41 41–6103 351. This service information may be examined at the FAA, Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City.

(f) The inspection and installations required by this AD shall be done in accordance with Pilatus Service Bulletin No. 55–001 dated November 8, 1996. This incorporation by reference was approved by the Director of the Federal Register in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51. Copies may be obtained from Pilatus Aircraft Ltd., Marketing Support Department, CH–6370 Stans, Switzerland. Copies may be inspected at the FAA, Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri, or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW, suite 700, Washington, DC.

Note 3: The subject of this AD is addressed in Swiss AD HB 96–535A, dated November 30, 1996, corrected January 28, 1998.

(g) This amendment (39–10367) becomes effective on May 29, 1998.

Issued in Kansas City, Missouri, on February 23, 1998.

Marvin R. Nuss,

Acting Manager, Small Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 98–5201 Filed 3–2–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97–SW–62–AD; Amendment 39–10371; AD 98–05–10]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Robinson Helicopter Company Model R44 Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to Robinson Helicopter Company (Robinson) Model R44 helicopters. This action requires replacing the aluminum elbows that connect the oil cooler lines to the engine accessory case with steel elbows. This amendment is prompted by two reports of cracks that were discovered in aluminum elbows. The actions specified in this AD are intended to prevent failure of either the 45° or 90° aluminum elbows that connect the oil lines from the oil cooler to the engine accessory case, which would cause loss of engine oil, resulting in an engine failure and a subsequent forced landing.

DATES: Effective March 18, 1998.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before May 4, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97–SW–62–AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Elizabeth Bumann, Aerospace Engineer, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Blvd., Lakewood, California 90712–4137,