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*Acting Manager, Transport Airplane
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 99-SW-14-AD]

Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Model SA-366G1 Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes the adoption of a new airworthiness directive (AD) applicable to Eurocopter France Model SA-366G1 helicopters. This proposal would require replacing certain electrical modules with airworthy electrical modules. This proposal is prompted by the discovery of several defective electrical modules. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent loss of electrical continuity, which could cause loss of critical systems and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before March 10, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 99-SW-14-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas. Comments may be inspected at this location between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robert McCallister, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, Fort Worth, Texas 76193-0110, telephone (817) 222-5121, fax (817) 222-5961.

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-14-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-14-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

Discussion

The Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile (DGAC), the airworthiness authority for France, has notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on Eurocopter France Model SA-366G1 helicopters. The DGAC advises of the discovery of malfunctions due to faulty "CONNECTRAL" modules on electrical circuits of a Super Puma AS332 helicopter. Model AS332 and SA-366G1 helicopters use the same type of "CONNECTRAL" modules.

Eurocopter France has issued Eurocopter Service Bulletin No. 01.25, dated May 28, 1998, (SB) for Model SA-366G1 helicopters. The SB specifies inspecting and replacing each "CONNECTRAL" green electrical module manufactured between week 95/16 through 96/21. The manufacturing codes identify the year and week of module production. Only green electrical modules without a white dot on the face need to be replaced. The DGAC classified this SB as mandatory and issued AD 98-251-022(A), dated July 1, 1998, to ensure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters in France.

This helicopter model is manufactured in France and is type certificated for operation in the United

States under the provisions of § 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.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other Eurocopter France Model SA-366G1 helicopters of the same type design registered in the United States, the proposed AD would require replacing each "CONNECTRAL" green electrical module that does not have a white dot on the face and that has a manufacturing code of 95/16 through 96/21 with an airworthy electrical module. Those manufacturing codes identify modules manufactured between the beginning of the 16th week of 1995 and the end of the 21st week of 1996. Replacing the electrical modules with a white dot on the face is not required because the manufacturer has verified the proper functioning of these units.

The FAA estimates that 94 helicopters of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 100 work hours per helicopter to accomplish the proposed actions, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately \$2,969 for the maximum number of modules replaced per helicopter, but the helicopter manufacturer has stated that the parts will be provided at no cost. Based on these figures, the total cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$564,000.

The regulations proposed herein would not have substantial direct effect 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, it is determined that this proposal would not have federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment under Executive Order 13132.

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 a new airworthiness directive to read as follows:

Eurocopter France: Docket No. 99-SW-14-AD.

Applicability: Model SA-366G1 helicopters, certificated in any category.

Note 1: This AD applies to each helicopter 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 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 (b) of this AD. The request should include an assessment of the effect of the modification, alteration, or repair on the unsafe condition addressed by this AD; and, if the unsafe condition has not been eliminated, the request should include specific proposed actions to address it.

Compliance: Required within 400 hours time-in-service or within 6 calendar months, whichever occurs first, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent loss of electrical continuity, which could cause loss of required systems and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter, accomplish the following:

(a) Replace each "CONNECTRAL" green electrical module that does not have a white dot on the face and that has a manufacturing code of 95/16 through 96/21 with an airworthy electrical module. Those

manufacturing codes identify modules manufactured between the beginning of the 16th week of 1995 and the end of the 21st week of 1996.

Note 2: Eurocopter France Service Bulletin No. 01.25, dated May 28, 1998, pertains to the subject of this AD.

(b) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used if approved by the Manager, Regulations Group, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA. Operators shall submit their requests through an FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may concur or comment and then send it to the Manager, Regulations Group.

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

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

Note 4: The subject of this AD is addressed in Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile AD 98-251-022(A), dated July 1, 1998.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on January 3, 2000.

Henry A. Armstrong,

Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

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