Dated: April 8, 1998.

David R. Kohler,

Acting General Counsel.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97–CE–27–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. MU–2B Series Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes to adopt a new airworthiness directive (AD) that would apply to certain Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. (Mitsubishi) MU–2B series airplanes. The proposed action would require repetitively inspecting the cockpit windshield and cabin window surfaces for damage (damage would be defined as crazing, scratches, and cracks). If any of the windshield or window surfaces have damage that exceeds certain limits, the proposed AD would require replacing the windshield or window. If the damage does not exceed certain limits, then the proposed AD would allow blending out the damage following maintenance manual procedures. The proposed AD is the result of mandatory continuing airworthiness information (MCAI) issued by the airworthiness authority for Japan. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent cockpit windshield or cabin window separation during flight, which could result in engine ingestion of glass, wing skin damage, or propeller damage, and possible loss of control of the airplane.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 11, 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–27–AD, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106. Comments may be inspected at this location between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, holidays excepted.

Service information that applies to the proposed AD may be obtained from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd., Nagoya Aerospace Systems Works, 10. OYE–CHO, MINATO–KU, Nagoya, Japan, telephone: NAGOYA (611) 2141, telex: 4464561HISI. This information also may be examined at the Rules Docket at the address above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. William Roberts, Aerospace Engineer, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, FAA, 3960 Paramount Blvd., Lakewood, California, 90712; telephone (562) 627–5224; facsimile (562) 627–5228.

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 that summarizes 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. 97–CE–27–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, Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97–CE–27–AD, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

Discussion

The Japanese Civil Airworthiness Bureau (JCAB), which is the airworthiness authority for Japan, recently notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on certain Mitsubishi MU–2B series airplanes. The JCAB reports that several Mitsubishi MU–2B series airplanes have had windshield or window separation during flight. Separation would be defined as shattering glass. Further analysis shows that the separation is happening as a result of repeated cabin pressurization cycles. These conditions, if not corrected, could result in shattering or separation of the cockpit windshield or cabin windows during flight, which could cause loss of control of the airplane.

Relevant Service Information

Mitsubishi has issued MU–2 Service Bulletin (SB) No. 224, dated June 30, 1995, and MU–2 SB No. 224A, dated October 30, 1995, which specifies procedures for repetitively inspecting and repairing or replacing the cockpit windshield (part numbers (P/N) 010A–31450–1/–2, P/N 010A–31451–1/–2, and P/N 010A–81874–1/–2 or an FAA-approved equivalent part number) or cabin windows (P/N 010A–31870, P/N 010A–31870–11, and P/N 030A–32402, or an FAA-approved equivalent part number), depending on the extent of the scratching, crazing, or cracking. If the scratching, crazing, or cracking is within the acceptable limits called out in Table 1 of the service bulletin, the procedure for repairing or blending out any damage is found in Chapter 3 of the Mitsubishi maintenance manual.

The JCAB classified these service bulletins as mandatory and issued AD No. TCD–4311–95, dated November 15, 1995, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in Japan. The Japanese AD confirms that the cause of glass shattering is the repeated pressurization of the airplane cabin, and refers the operators to the Mitsubishi service bulletins for inspection and repair instructions, but the AD did not cite the incidents of shattered windows on the MU–2B series airplanes during flight as the reason for the issuance of the JCAB AD.

The FAA's Determination

These Mitsubishi MU–2B series airplanes are manufactured in Japan 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 JCAB has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above. The FAA has examined the findings of the JCAB, 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 the Proposed AD

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop in other Mitsubishi MU–2B series airplanes of the same type design registered in the United States, the FAA is proposing AD action. The proposed AD would require repetitively inspecting the affected cockpit windshields and cabin windows for damage and repairing or replacing the affected glass, depending on the extent of the damage. Accomplishment of the proposed inspection, and repair or replacement would be in accordance with Mitsubishi MU–2 Service Bulletin (SB) No. 224, dated June 30, 1995, and MU–2 SB No. 224A, dated October 30, 1995.

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 200 airplanes in the U.S. registry would be affected by the proposed AD, that it would take approximately 8 workhours to accomplish the proposed inspection, and that the average labor rate is approximately $60 an hour. If a replacement window is needed, it would take approximately 16 workhours to accomplish the replacement with the average labor rate of $60 per hour. Parts are provided at no cost by the manufacturer. Based on these figures, the total cost for the inspection would be $480 per airplane or $96,000 for the entire U.S. registered fleet. If a replacement is needed, the total cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be $192,000 or $960 per airplane.

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 action (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) 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 has been placed 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 (AD) to read as follows:

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. (Mitsubishi): Docket No. 97–CE–27–AD.

Applicability: Models MU–2B, MU–2B–10, MU–2B–15, MU–2B–20, MU–2B–25, MU–2B–26 airplanes (serial numbers (S/N) 008 through 312, 314 through 320, and 322 through 347), and MU–2B–30, MU–2B–35, MU–2B–36 airplanes (S/N 501 through 651, 653 through 660, and 662 through 696), certificated in any category, that are equipped with the following part numbered windshields and cabin windows:

010A–31450–1/–2	Windshield (LH/RH).
010A–31451–1/–2	Cockpit side window (LH/RH).
010A–81874–1/–2	Cockpit side window (LH/RH).
010A–31870	Cabin Window.
010A–31870–11 ..	Cabin Window (at door).
030A–32402	Long body-small cabin window.

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 within the next 100 hours time-in-service (TIS) after the effective date of this AD, unless already accomplished, and thereafter at intervals not to exceed 100 hours TIS from the last inspection, repair or replacement.

To prevent cockpit windshield or cabin window separation (shattering) during flight, which could result in engine ingestion of glass, wing skin damage, or propeller damage, and possible loss of control of the airplane, accomplish the following:

(a) Inspect the cockpit windshields and cabin windows for scratching, crazing, and cracking in accordance with Part I and Table 1. ''Damage and Definitions'' of the Instructions section in Mitsubishi MU–2 Service Bulletin (SB) No. 224, dated June 30, 1995, and Mitsubishi MU–2 SB No. 224A, dated October 30, 1995.

(b) If any of the windshields or windows listed in the applicability section of this AD are damaged beyond the limits according to Part I, paragraph 3. ''Acceptable Limits for Damage'' of the Instructions section, prior to further flight, replace the window or windshield in accordance with the Part II ''Windshield/Window Glass Replacement'' section of the Mitsubishi MU–2 SB No. 224, dated June 30, 1995, Mitsubishi MU–2 SB No. 224A, dated October 30, 1995, and Chapter 3 of the applicable Mitsubishi Maintenance Manual.

(c) Prior to further flight, repair any damaged windshield or window that is within the limits (referenced in Table 2 of Mitsubishi MU–2 SB No. 224, dated June 30, 1995) in accordance with Chapter 3 of the applicable Mitsubishi Maintenance Manual.

(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 times that provides an equivalent level of safety may be approved by the Manager, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, FAA, 3960 Paramount Blvd., Lakewood, California, 90712. The request shall be forwarded through an appropriate FAA Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office.

Note 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office.

(f) All persons affected by this directive may obtain copies of the documents referred to herein upon request to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd., Nagoya Aerospace Systems Works, 10. OYE–CHO, MINATO–KU, Nagoya, Japan; or may examine these documents at the FAA, Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

Note 3: The subject of this AD is addressed in Japanese AD No. TCD–4311–95, dated November 15, 1995.

Issued in Kansas City, Missouri, on April 3, 1998.

Michael Gallagher,

Manager, Small Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 98–9584 Filed 4–13–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 98–NM–20–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Model A320–111, –211, and –231 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 A320–111, –211, and –231 series airplanes. This proposal would require repetitive inspections to detect missing or cracked bolts and fittings of the frame-to-pressure-floor connection; and corrective actions, if necessary. This proposal also provides for optional terminating action for the repetitive inspections of the affected fittings. 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 detect and correct fatigue cracking in the bolts and fittings of the frame-to-pressure-floor connection, which could result in reduced structural integrity of the airplane.

DATES: Comments must be received by May 14, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 98–NM–20–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: Norman B. Martenson, Manager, International Branch, ANM–116, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056; telephone (425) 227–2110; 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 98–NM–20–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. 98–NM–20–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 A320–111, –211, and –231 series airplanes. The DGAC advises that, during a structural fatigue test, the inboard aft bolt at the right side of frame 43 sheared off after 76,055 simulated flights. In addition, a crack developed in the frame fitting at the right side of frame 43 after 81,551 simulated flights. Such fatigue cracking, if not detected and corrected in a timely manner, could result in reduced structural integrity of the airplane.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

Airbus has issued Service Bulletin A320–53–1083, Revision 2, dated August 28, 1997, which describes procedures for repetitive detailed visual inspections to detect cracking of the bolts and fittings of the frame-to-pressure-floor connection at frames (FR) 43 and 44 and to determine if any bolt is missing. The service bulletin also describes procedures for replacement of cracked or missing bolts and fittings with new or serviceable parts.

The service bulletin references Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1015, Revision 02, dated July 17, 1997, as an additional source of service information for accomplishment of the replacement. Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1015 also describes procedures for reinforcement of the frame segments and frame fittings at FR 43 and FR 44 between left and right stringers 18 and 23. Such reinforcement, if accomplished, eliminates the need for the repetitive inspections for the affected fitting.

The DGAC classified Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1083 as mandatory and issued French airworthiness directive 97–316–110(B), dated October 22, 1997, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in France.

FAA's Conclusions

This airplane model is manufactured in France 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 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 Airbus Service Bulletins A320–53–