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 the service bulletin described previously, except as discussed below.

Differences Between Proposed Rule and Service Bulletin

Operators should note that, although the service bulletin specifies that the manufacturer may be contacted for disposition of certain repair conditions, this proposal would require the repair of those conditions to be accomplished in accordance with a method approved by either the FAA or the Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile (or its delegated agent).

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 9 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 6 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed actions, and that the average labor rate is $60 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately $390 per airplane. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be $6,750, or $750 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:

Airbus Industrie: Docket 97–NM–159–AD.

Applicability: Model A320–111, –211, and –231 series airplanes, on which Airbus Modification 20903 has not been installed; certificated in any category.

Note 1: This AD applies to each airplane 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 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 (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 as indicated, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent fatigue cracking of certain fastener holes on the outer frames of the fuselage, which could result in reduced structural integrity of the airplane, accomplish the following:

(a) Prior to the accumulation of 20,000 total flight cycles, or within 4,000 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later, remove the existing fasteners located at fuselage frame 35 between the left- and right-hand stringers 30 and 31, and perform a rotating probe inspection to detect fatigue cracking of the fastener holes, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1137, dated June 24, 1997.

(1) If no cracking is detected, prior to further flight, modify the fastener holes and install new, improved fasteners, in accordance with the service bulletin.

(2) If any cracking is detected, prior to further flight, repair in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, International Branch, ANM–116, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate; or the Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile (or its delegated agent).

(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, International Branch, ANM–116. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, International Branch, ANM–116.

Note 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the International Branch, ANM–116.

(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.

Note 3: The subject of this AD is addressed in French airworthiness directive 98–154–113(B), dated April 8, 1998.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on July 8, 1998.

S.R. Miller,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 98–18776 Filed 7–14–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97–NM–227–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 727–200 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 all Boeing Model 727–200 series airplanes. This proposal would require repetitive inspections to detect cracks in certain areas between the upper and lower sills of the number 1 cargo door, and repair,

if necessary. This proposal is prompted by reports indicating that fatigue cracks were found in certain structures adjacent to the number 1 cargo door cutout at the forward and aft doorway frames. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to detect and correct such fatigue cracking, which could result in rapid decompression of the fuselage and consequent reduced structural integrity of the airplane.

DATES: Comments must be received by August 31, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No.97–NM–227–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: Walter Sippel, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM–120S, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056; telephone (425) 227–2774; 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 97–NM–227–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. 97–NM–227–AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056.

Discussion

The FAA has received reports indicating that cracks were found in the structure adjacent to the number 1 cargo door cutout at the doorway frames at body station (BS) 560 and BS 620 on Boeing Model 727–200 series airplanes. In one of these incidents, the aft frame web and frame inner chord of the number 1 cargo door cutout, which was previously repaired because of cracking, was found completely severed. In another incident, a crack was found in the aft doorway structure of the number 1 cargo door during pressure cycling of the fuselage of a Model 727–200 series airplane. The frame web and the frame inner and outer chords were severed and cracks were found in the bear strap and skin, which prevented pressurization of the airplane. The cracking has been attributed to fatigue, caused by pressurization cycles of the fuselage structure. Such fatigue cracking, if not corrected, could result in rapid decompression of the fuselage and consequent reduced structural integrity of the airplane.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 727–53A0219, Revision 1, dated May 8, 1997, which describes the following procedures:

- Performing repetitive close visual inspections to detect cracks in the forward and aft frames, bear strap, and fuselage skin between the upper and lower sills of the number 1 cargo door at BS 560 and BS 620;
- Performing repetitive high frequency eddy current inspections to detect cracks in the forward and aft frames, and bear strap between the upper and lower sills of the number 1 cargo door at BS 560 and BS 620; and
- Repairing any cracked forward or aft frame, bear strap, or fuselage skin.

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, except as discussed below.

Differences Between Proposed Rule and Relevant Alert Service Bulletin

Operators should note that, although the referenced alert service bulletin specifies that the manufacturer may be contacted for disposition of certain conditions, this proposal would require the repair of those conditions to be accomplished in accordance with a method approved by the FAA. Likewise, operators also should note that, although the alert service bulletin defines the inspection intervals and methods for inspecting repairs that have been accomplished after contacting the manufacturer for repair information, this proposal would require the inspection methods and intervals to be accomplished in accordance with methods and intervals approved by the FAA.

Interim Action

This is considered to be interim action until final action is identified, at which time the FAA may consider further rulemaking.

Other Relevant Rulemaking

The FAA has previously issued AD 98–11–03, amendment 39–10530 (63 FR 27455, May 19, 1998), which addresses, in part, cracking of the number 1 cargo door cutout structure on certain Model 727 series airplanes. That AD requires that the FAA-approved maintenance or inspection program be revised to include inspections of Structural Significant Items, and repair of cracked structure. These actions are conducted as part of the Supplemental Structural Inspection Program. (Components of the number 1 cargo door cutout structure are identified as structural significant items.) This proposed AD would not affect the current requirements of AD 98–11–03.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 1,100 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 770 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 60 work

hours 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 $2,772,000, or $3,600 per airplane, per inspection cycle.

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 97–NM–227–AD.

Applicability: All Model 727–200 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 (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, unless accomplished previously.

To detect and correct fatigue cracking between the upper and lower sills of the number 1 cargo door, which could result in rapid decompression of the fuselage and consequent reduced structural integrity of the airplane, accomplish the following:

(a) Perform a close visual inspection or a high frequency eddy current (HFEC) inspection (as applicable) to detect cracks in the forward and aft frames (web, inner chord, and outer chord), bear strap, and fuselage skin between the upper and lower sills of the number 1 cargo door at BS 560 and BS 620; in accordance with Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 727–53A0219, Revision 1, dated May 8, 1997; at the time specified in paragraph (a)(1), (a)(2), or (a)(3) of this AD, as applicable.

(1) For airplanes on which the repair to the forward or aft frame (web, inner chord, or outer chord), bear strap, or fuselage skin specified in the alert service bulletin has not been accomplished: Inspect prior to the accumulation of 30,000 total flight cycles, or within 3,000 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later.

(2) For airplanes on which the repair to the forward or aft frame (web, inner chord, or outer chord) specified in the alert service bulletin has been accomplished: Inspect within 3,000 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD.

(3) For airplanes on which the repair to the bear strap, fuselage skin, or a combination of the frame web and chord (inner or outer) on either the forward or aft frame specified in the alert service bulletin has been accomplished: Inspect within 3,000 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate.

Note 2: Where there are differences between this AD and the referenced alert service bulletin, the AD prevails.

Note 3: The inspections specified in paragraph (a)(3) of this AD are not defined in the alert service bulletin.

(b) If no crack is detected during any inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD, accomplish paragraph (b)(1) or (b)(2) of this AD, as applicable.

(1) For airplanes identified in paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this AD: Repeat the close visual and HFEC inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD thereafter at the times specified in paragraphs (b)(1)(i) and (b)(1)(ii) of this AD.

(i) Repeat the close visual inspection of the frame web at intervals not to exceed 3,000 flight cycles.

(ii) Repeat the close visual and HFEC inspections (as applicable) of the frame web, frame inner and outer chords, bear strap, and fuselage skin thereafter at intervals not to exceed 15,000 flight cycles.

(2) For airplanes identified in paragraph (a)(3) of this AD: Repeat the inspections of the repaired bear strap, fuselage skin, or combination of a repaired frame web and chord (inner or outer) thereafter at intervals not to exceed those approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO.

(c) If any crack is detected during any inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD, prior to further flight, accomplish paragraph (c)(1) or (c)(2) of this AD, as applicable.

(1) For any crack detected in the frame web, inner chord, or outer chord: Repair in accordance with Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 727–53A0219, Revision 1, dated May 8, 1997. Prior to the accumulation of 3,000 flight cycles after accomplishment of the repair, accomplish the close visual and HFEC inspections specified in paragraph (a) of this AD. Repeat the close visual inspection of the frame web thereafter at intervals not to exceed 3,000 flight cycles. Repeat the close visual and HFEC inspections (as applicable) of the frame web, inner chord, and outer chord thereafter at intervals not to exceed 15,000 flight cycles.

(2) For any crack detected in the fuselage skin, bear strap, or a combination of the frame web and chord (inner or outer): Repair and perform repetitive inspections in accordance with both a method and repetitive inspection interval approved by the Manager, Seattle ACO.

Note 4: The repairs and inspections specified in paragraph (c)(2) of this AD are not defined in the alert service bulletin.

(d) 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.

(e) 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 July 8, 1998.

S. R. Miller,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 98–18775 Filed 7–14–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 98–CE–67–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Slingsby Sailplanes Ltd., Models Dart T.51, Dart T.51/17, and Dart T.51/17R Sailplanes

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 all Slingsby Sailplanes Ltd. (Slingsby) Models Dart T.51, Dart T.51/17, and Dart T.51/17R sailplanes that are equipped with aluminum alloy spar booms. The proposed AD would require repetitively inspecting the aluminum alloy spar booms and the wing attach fittings for delamination or corrosion damage, and repairing any delamination or corrosion damage found. The proposed AD is the result of mandatory continuing airworthiness information (MCAI) issued by the airworthiness authority for the United Kingdom. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent failure of the spar assembly and adjoining structure caused by delamination or corrosion damage to the aluminum alloy spar booms or the wing attach fittings, which could result in reduced controllability or loss of control of the sailplane.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before August 14, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Central Region, Office of the Regional Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 98–CE–67–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 Slingsby Aviation Ltd., Kirbymoorside, York Y06 6EZ England; telephone: +44(0)1751 432474; facsimile: +44(0)1751 431173. This information also may be examined at the Rules Docket at the address above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Mike Kiesov, Aerospace Engineer, Small Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service, FAA, 1201 Walnut, suite 900, Kansas City, Missouri 64106; telephone: (816) 426–6934; facsimile: (816) 426–2169.

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. 98–CE–67–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. 98–CE–67–AD, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

Discussion

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which is the airworthiness authority for the United Kingdom, notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on Slingsby Models Dart T.51, Dart T.51/17, and Dart T.51/17R sailplanes that are equipped with aluminum alloy spar booms. The CAA reports an incident of glue joint failure on a starboard wing caused by water entering the area of the airbrake box. Investigation of this incident revealed delamination and corrosion in the area of the aluminum alloy spar booms and the wing attach fittings.

These conditions, if not detected and corrected, could result in failure of the spar assembly and adjoining structure with possible reduced controllability or loss of control of the sailplane.

Relevant Service Information

Slingsby has issued Technical Instruction (TI) No. 109/T51, Issue No. 2, dated October 7, 1997, which specifies procedures for inspecting the aluminum alloy spar booms and the wing attach fittings for delamination or corrosion damage.

The CAA classified this service bulletin as mandatory and issued British AD 005–09–97, dated October 3, 1997, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these sailplanes in the United Kingdom.

The FAA's Determination

These sailplane models are manufactured in the United Kingdom 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 CAA has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above.

The FAA has examined the findings of the CAA; 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 Slingsby Models Dart T.51, Dart T.51/17, and Dart T.51/17R sailplanes equipped with aluminum alloy spar booms of the same type design registered in the United States, the FAA is proposing AD action. The proposed AD would require repetitively inspecting the aluminum alloy spar booms and the wing attach fittings for delamination or corrosion damage, and repairing any delamination or corrosion damage found. Accomplishment of the proposed inspection would be in accordance with Slingsby TI No. 109/T51, Issue No. 2, dated October 7, 1997.