Issued in Renton, Washington, on July 27, 1998.

S.R. Miller,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97–NM–87–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 747–100, –200, and –300 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, –200, and –300 series airplanes. This proposal would require repetitive inspections to detect cracking of certain lower lobe fuselage frames, and repair, if necessary. This proposal is prompted by reports indicating that fatigue cracks were found in lower lobe frames on the left side of the fuselage. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to detect and correct fatigue cracking of certain lower lobe fuselage frames, which could lead to fatigue cracks in the fuselage skin, and consequent rapid decompression of the airplane.

DATES: Comments must be received by September 18, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97–NM–87–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: Bob Breneman, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM–120S, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056; telephone (425) 227–2776; 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–87–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–87–AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056.

Discussion

The FAA has received reports indicating that fatigue cracking was found on a total of 19 lower lobe fuselage frames on Boeing Model 747 series airplanes. Two of these airplanes had completely severed frame inner chords, webs, and fail-safe chords on adjacent frames. A severed frame will result in increased fuselage skin stresses, which could lead to skin cracking. In the area of the lower lobe fuselage frames from Body Station (BS) 1820 to BS 2100, the fuselage skin does not have tearstraps to arrest a skin crack. Instead of tearstraps, this area has fail-safe chords attached to the fuselage frames which reduce the stress levels in the fuselage skin such that a crack in the skin would be stopped. With a completely severed fuselage frame inner chord, web, and fail-safe chord, there is nothing to prevent a skin crack from propagating beyond several fuselage frame bays. This condition, if not detected and corrected, could result in rapid decompression of the airplane.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747–53A2408, dated April 25, 1996, which describes procedures for repetitive detailed visual inspections to detect cracking of the lower lobe fuselage frames from BS 1820 to BS 2100, and repair, if necessary.

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 the Proposed AD and Relevant Service Bulletin

Operators should note that, unlike the initial compliance time (specified as prior to the accumulation of 16,000 total flight cycles, or within 1,500 flight cycles or 18 months, whichever occurs first) for airplanes identified in the alert service bulletin, the proposed AD would require that those airplanes be inspected prior to the accumulation of 15,000 total flight cycles, or within 1,500 flight cycles or 18 months, whichever occurs first. Because the FAA received a report of cracking on an airplane that had accumulated only 15,227 total flight cycles, the FAA finds a compliance threshold of 15,000 total flight cycles for initiating the proposed actions to be warranted, in that it represents an appropriate interval of time allowable for affected airplanes to continue to operate without compromising safety.

Operators also should note that, although the alert service bulletin allows discount from the compliance threshold of all flight cycles at or below a cabin pressure differential of 2.0 pounds per square inch (psi), the proposed AD does not. The FAA received a report of cracking on an airplane that had accumulated 12,817 full pressure cycles, plus 8,761 cycles at less than 2.0 psi differential pressure. The reported cracking was more

indicative of an airplane that had accumulated 20,000 total flight cycles. If this proposed AD were to allow discount of flight cycles, as recommended in the alert service bulletin, the actions required by this proposed AD would not be required to be accomplished on the airplane discussed previously. Therefore, cracking on that airplane would have gone undetected. These facts indicate that discounting cycles at or below a cabin pressure differential of 2.0 psi is not warranted for the proposed AD.

The alert service bulletin also allows operators of Model 747SR series airplanes to use a 1.2 adjustment factor for the reduction of the inspection compliance threshold and interval. In previous AD's, the FAA has allowed the use of the 1.2 adjustment factor for these airplanes; however, data have since become available to the FAA that indicate the use of the 1.2 adjustment factor is unconservative. The FAA has determined that use of the 1.2 adjustment factor is not in the best interest of aviation safety, and that its use shall be discontinued. Therefore, the proposed AD does not allow reduction of the inspection compliance threshold and interval for operators of Model 747SR series airplanes that operate at reduced cabin differential pressure.

The alert service bulletin specifies that, in the event that cracking is found during the inspection of the lower lobe frames, an inspection of the fuselage skin should be conducted in accordance with the 747 Structural Repair Manual (SRM) or inspection data supplied by the manufacturer. However, the proposed AD requires a detailed visual inspection of the adjacent structure within 20 inches of the crack location on the frame to detect fuselage skin cracking.

In addition, although the alert service bulletin specifies that certain repairs required by this proposed AD may be accomplished in accordance with the 747 SRM or repair data supplied by the manufacturer, the proposed AD would require that those repairs be accomplished in accordance with the 747 SRM or in accordance with a method approved by the FAA.

Interim Action

This is considered to be interim action until the accomplishment of AD 93–08–12, amendment 39–8559 (58 FR 27927, May 12, 1993). That AD requires a detailed visual internal inspection to detect cracks in the Section 46 lower lobe frames, and repair, if necessary, in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 747–53–2349, dated June 27, 1991. The initial inspection required by AD 93–08–12 is required prior to the accumulation of 22,000 total flight cycles. The FAA now finds that earlier inspection (i.e., prior to accumulation of 15,000 total flight cycles) of the lower lobe frames is warranted, as required by this proposed AD.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 452 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 152 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately 2 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed inspection, and that the average labor rate is $60 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the inspection proposed by this AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be $18,240, or $120 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–87–AD.

Applicability: Model 747–100, –200, and –300 series airplanes, as listed in Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747–53A2408, dated April 25, 1996; 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 detect and correct fatigue cracking of certain lower lobe fuselage frames, which could lead to fatigue cracks in the fuselage skin, and consequent rapid decompression of the airplane, accomplish the following:

Note 2: Although Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747–53A2408, dated April 25, 1996, allows discount from the compliance threshold of all flight cycles at or below a cabin pressure differential of 2.0 pounds per square inch (psi), this AD requires that all flight cycles be counted.

(a) For airplanes on which the initial detailed visual internal inspection of the Section 46 lower lobe frames required by paragraph (a)(3) of AD 93–08–12, amendment 39–8559, has not been accomplished: Perform a detailed visual inspection to detect cracking of the lower lobe fuselage frames from Body Station 1820 to Body Station 2100, in accordance with Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 747–53A2408, dated April 25, 1996, at the later of the times specified in paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this AD:

(1) Prior to the accumulation of 15,000 total flight cycles; or

(2) Within 1,500 flight cycles or 18 months after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs first.

Note 3: Paragraph (a)(3) of AD 93–08–12 requires a detailed visual internal inspection

to detect cracks in the Section 46 lower lobe frames, in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 747–53–2349, dated June 27, 1991. The initial inspection is required prior to the accumulation of 22,000 total flight cycles, or within 1,000 flight cycles after June 11, 1993 (the effective date of AD 93–08–12), whichever occurs later.

(b) If no cracking is detected during the inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD, repeat the inspection thereafter at intervals not to exceed 3,000 flight cycles.

(c) If any cracking is detected during any inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD, prior to further flight, accomplish paragraphs (c)(1) and (c)(2) of this AD:

(1) Within 20 inches of the crack location on the frame, perform a detailed visual inspection of the adjacent structure to detect cracking. If any cracking is detected, prior to further flight, repair in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, or in accordance with the Boeing 747 Structural Repair Manual.

(2) Repeat the inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD thereafter at intervals not to exceed 3,000 flight cycles.

(d) Accomplishment of the initial detailed visual internal inspection of the Section 46 lower lobe frames required by paragraph (a)(3) of AD 93–08–12 constitutes terminating action for the requirements of this AD.

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

(f) 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 27, 1998.

S.R. Miller,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 98–20675 Filed 8–3–98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 71

[Airspace Docket No. 97–ASO–19]

RIN 2120–AA66

Proposed Modification of Jet Route J–41; Florida

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking.

SUMMARY: This action proposes to modify Jet Route 41 (J–41) by altering J–41 between the Lee County, FL, Very High Frequency Omnidirectional Range/Tactical Air Navigation (VORTAC) and the Seminole, FL, VORTAC. The FAA is proposing this modification of J–41 to increase system capacity, enhance safety, and improve the management of air traffic operations in the west Florida area.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before September 18, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Send comments on the proposal in triplicate to: Manager, Air Traffic Division, ASO–500, Docket No. 97–ASO–19, Federal Aviation Administration, P.O. Box 20636, Atlanta, GA 30320.

The official docket may be examined in the Rules Docket, Office of the Chief Counsel, Room 916G, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC, weekdays, except Federal holidays, between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

An informal docket may also be examined during normal business hours at the Office of the Regional Air Traffic Division.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Patricia Crawford, Airspace and Rules Division, ATA–400, Office of Air Traffic Airspace Management, Federal Aviation Administration, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591; telephone: (202) 267–8783.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

Interested parties are invited to participate in this proposed rulemaking by submitting such written data, views, or arguments as they may desire. Comments that provide the factual basis supporting the views and suggestions presented are particularly helpful in developing reasoned regulatory decisions on the proposal. Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, aeronautical, economic, environmental, and energy-related aspects of the proposal. Communications should identify the airspace docket number and be submitted in triplicate to the address listed above. Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their comments on this notice must submit with those comments a self addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: ''Comments to Airspace Docket No. 97–ASO–19.'' The postcard will be date/time stamped and returned to the commenter. All communications received on or before the specified closing date for comments will be considered before taking action on the proposed rule. The proposal contained in this notice may be changed in light of comments received. All comments submitted will be available for examination in the Rules Docket both before and after the closing date for comments. A report summarizing each substantive public contact with FAA personnel concerned with this rulemaking will be filed in the docket.

Availability of NPRM's

An electronic copy of this document may be downloaded, using a modem and suitable software, from the FAA regulations section of the Fedworld electronic bulletin board service (telephone: 703–321–3339) or the Federal Register's electronic bulletin board service (telephone: 202–512–1661). Internet users may reach the Federal Register's web page at http:www.access.gpo.govsu—docs for access to recently published rulemaking documents.

Any person may obtain a copy of this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) by submitting a request to the Federal Aviation Administration, Office of Air Traffic Airspace Management, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591, or by calling (202) 267-8783. Communications must identify the notice number of this NPRM. Persons interested in being placed on a mailing list for future NPRM's should also request a copy of Advisory Circular No. 112A, which describes the application procedure.

The Proposal

The FAA is proposing to amend 14 CFR part 71 (part 71) by altering the route of J–41 between the Lee County, FL, VORTAC and the Seminole, FL, VORTAC. Currently, aircraft landing in the Tampa and Sarasota/Fort Myers areas are routed over the St. Petersburg, FL, VORTAC, which also serves as a major navigational aid for transitioning aircraft into southern Florida. Due to the volume of air traffic utilizing the St. Petersburg VORTAC, it would be advantageous to segregate aircraft