ton crop during the 1998–99 crop year, of which 8,500 tons are not expected to be salable because of size or quality, leaving a balance of 161,500 salable tons.

The Committee reviewed and unanimously recommended 1998–99 expenditures of $348,840 which included increases in administrative and office salaries and operating expenses. Prior to arriving at the 1998–99 budget, the Committee reviewed a budget that did not reflect any salary increases. Despite the expected reduced size of the crop, it recommended salary increases, thus increasing the budget. The assessment rate of $2.16 per ton of salable dried prunes was then determined by dividing the total recommended budget by the quantity of salable dried prunes, estimated at 161,500 salable tons for the 1998–99 crop year. The Committee is authorized to use excess assessment funds from the 1997–98 crop year (currently estimated at $48,255) for up to five months beyond the end of the crop year to fund 1998–99 crop year expenses. At the end of the five months, the Committee refunds or credits excess funds to handlers (§ 993.81(c)).

Recent price information indicates that the grower price for the 1998–99 season should average $800 per salable ton of dried prunes. Based on estimated shipments of 161,500 salable tons, the estimated assessment revenue for the 1998–99 crop year is expected to be less than 1 percent of the total expected grower revenue.

This action would increase the assessment obligation imposed on handlers. While assessments impose some additional costs on handlers, the costs are minimal and uniform on all handlers. Some of the additional costs may be passed on to producers. However, these costs would be offset by the benefits derived by the operation of the marketing order. In addition, the Committee's meeting was widely publicized throughout the California dried prune industry, and all interested persons were invited to attend the meeting and participate in Committee deliberations on all issues. Like all Committee meetings, the June 25, 1998, meeting was a public meeting and all entities, both large and small, were able to express views on this issue. Finally, interested persons are invited to submit information on the regulatory and informational impacts of this action on small businesses.

This proposed rule would impose no additional reporting or recordkeeping requirements on either small or large California dried prune handlers. As with all Federal marketing order programs, reports and forms are periodically reviewed to reduce information requirements and duplication by industry and public sector agencies.

The Department has not identified any relevant Federal rules that duplicate, overlap, or conflict with this rule.

A 30-day comment period is provided to allow interested persons to respond to this proposed rule. Thirty days is deemed appropriate because: (1) The 1998–99 crop year begins on August 1, 1998, and the marketing order requires that the rate of assessment for each crop year apply to all assessable dried prunes handled during such crop year; (2) the Committee needs to have sufficient funds to pay its expenses which are incurred on a continuous basis; and (3) handlers are aware of this action which was unanimously recommended by the Committee at a public meeting and is similar to other assessment rate actions issued in past years.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 993

Marketing agreements, Plums, Prunes, Reporting and Recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 993 is proposed to be amended as follows:

PART 993—DRIED PRUNES PRODUCED IN CALIFORNIA

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 993 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601–674.

2. Section 993.347 is proposed to be revised to read as follows:

§ 993.347 Assessment rate.

On and after August 1, 1998, an assessment rate of $2.16 per ton is established for California dried prunes.

Dated: August 3, 1998.

Robert C. Keeney,

Deputy Administrator, Fruit and Vegetable Programs.

[FR Doc. 98–21198 Filed 8–6–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97–NM–192–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Model A320 Series Airplanes Equipped With a Bulk Cargo Door

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 Airbus Model A320 series airplanes equipped with a bulk cargo door. This proposal would require repetitive inspections to detect fatigue cracking of the upper frame flanges; and repair, if necessary. This proposal also would require modification of the upper frame flanges of the bulk cargo door, which constitutes terminating action for the repetitive inspections. 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 prevent fatigue cracking of the upper frame flanges, which could result in reduced structural integrity of the airplane.

DATES: Comments must be received by September 8, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97–NM–192–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 97–NM–192–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–192–AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056.

Discussion

The Direction Ǵeńerale de l'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on all Airbus Model A320 series airplanes equipped with a bulk cargo door. The DGAC advises that, during full-scale fatigue testing on a Model A320 test article, fatigue cracking occurred at 89,000 simulated flights between frames 60 and 62 on the upper frame flanges. Such fatigue cracking, if not corrected, could result in reduced structural integrity of the airplane.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

Airbus has issued Service Bulletin A320–53–1022, Revision 1, dated June 18, 1992, which describes procedures for repetitive high frequency eddy current inspections to detect fatigue cracking of the upper frame flanges.

In addition, Airbus has issued Service Bulletin A320–53–1021, Revision 1, dated April 13, 1992, which describes procedures for a one-time high frequency eddy current inspection to detect fatigue cracking of the upper frame flanges; repair, if necessary; and modification of the upper frame flanges. The repair entails stop drilling the cracked hole, and installing a new angle, shim, and plate on frame 60 and/or 62. The modification involves reworking and flap peening the upper frame flanges of frames 60 and 62.

Accomplishment of the repair or the modification would eliminate the need for the repetitive inspections described in Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1022, Revision 1.

Accomplishment of the actions specified in the service bulletins is intended to adequately address the identified unsafe condition. The DGAC classified Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1022, Revision 1, as mandatory; approved Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1021, Revision 1; and issued French airworthiness directive 96–238–091(B), dated October 23, 1996, 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 the service bulletins described previously, except as discussed below.

Differences Between Proposed Rule and Foreign AD

The proposed AD would differ from the parallel French airworthiness directive in that it would mandate the accomplishment of the terminating action for the repetitive inspections. The French airworthiness directive provides for that action as optional.

Mandating the terminating action is based on the FAA's determination that long-term continued operational safety will be better assured by modifications or design changes to remove the source of the problem, rather than by repetitive inspections. Long-term inspections may not be providing the degree of safety assurance necessary for the transport airplane fleet. This, coupled with a better understanding of the human factors associated with numerous continual inspections, has led the FAA to consider placing less emphasis on inspections and more emphasis on design improvements. The proposed modification requirement is in consonance with these conditions.

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 8 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD.

It would take approximately 1 work hour per airplane to accomplish the proposed inspection, at an average labor rate of $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 $480, or $60 per airplane, per inspection cycle.

It would take approximately 4 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed modification, at an average labor rate of $60 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the modification proposed by this AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be $1,920, or $240 per airplane.

The cost impact figures discussed above are 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–192–AD.

Applicability: Model A320 series airplanes, equipped with a bulk cargo door (Airbus Modification 20029), 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 (c) 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 the upper frame flanges, 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 1,200 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later: Perform a high frequency eddy current inspection to detect fatigue cracking of the upper frame flanges, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1022, Revision 1, dated June 18, 1992.

(1) If no cracking is detected, accomplish either paragraph (a)(1)(i) or (a)(1)(ii) of this AD.

(i) Repeat the eddy current inspection thereafter at intervals not to exceed 1,200 flight cycles until accomplishment of the requirements of paragraph (b) of this AD. Or

(ii) Prior to further flight, modify the upper frame flanges, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1021, Revision 1, dated April 13, 1992. This modification constitutes terminating action for the requirements of this AD.

(2) If any cracking is detected, prior to further flight, repair in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1021, Revision 1, dated April 13, 1992. Accomplishment of the repair constitutes terminating action for the requirements of this AD.

(b) Prior to the accumulation of 26,000 total flight cycles, or within 6,000 flight cycles after the effective date of this AD, whichever occurs later: Perform a high frequency eddy current inspection to detect fatigue cracking of the upper frame flanges, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320–53–1021, Revision 1, dated April 13, 1992.

(1) If no cracking is detected, prior to further flight, modify the upper frame flanges, in accordance with the service bulletin. Accomplishment of this modification constitutes terminating action for the requirements of this AD.

(2) If any cracking is detected, prior to further flight, repair in accordance with the service bulletin. Accomplishment of the repair constitutes terminating action for the requirements of this AD.

(c) 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, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate. 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.

(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.

Note 3: The subject of this AD is addressed in French airworthiness directive 96–238–091(B), dated October 23, 1996.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on July 31, 1998.

Darrell M. Pederson,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 98–21104 Filed 8–6–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 98–NM–138–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Short Brothers Model SD3–60 SHERPA 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 Short Brothers Model SD3–60 SHERPA series airplanes. This proposal would require an initial cleaning and visual inspection of the distance piece and adjacent side plates of the fuselage wing strut pick-up of the left- and right-stub wings to detect corrosion; rework or replacement of damaged components; and, for certain conditions, follow-on repetitive cleaning and visual inspections of reworked components. 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 corrosion of the distance piece and adjacent side plates, which could result in reduced strength of the wing strut attachment to the stub wing on the fuselage, and consequent reduced structural integrity of the main wing.

DATES: Comments must be received by September 8, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 98–NM–138–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 Short Brothers, Airworthiness & Engineering Quality, P.O. Box 241, Airport Road, Belfast BT3 9DZ, Northern Ireland. 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,