lower longerons on the inboard nacelles in accordance with Bombardier Service Bulletin S.B. 7–54–19, Revision 'C,' dated April 16, 1999.

Modification

(b) If no corrosion is detected, prior to further flight, modify the upper and lower longeron halves in accordance with Bombardier Service Bulletin S.B. 7–54–19, Revision 'C,' dated April 16, 1999.

Corrective Action

(c) If any corrosion is detected, prior to further flight, accomplish the actions specified in paragraph (c)(1) or (c)(2) of this AD, as applicable, in accordance with Bombardier Service Bulletin S.B. 7–54–19, Revision 'C,' dated April 16, 1999.

(1) For corrosion that is within the limits specified in the service bulletin: Accomplish the corrective actions specified in the service bulletin, and perform a fluorescent penetrant inspection or high frequency eddy current inspection to detect cracks in areas where corrosion was blended out. The corrective actions and inspections shall be done in accordance with the service bulletin.

(i) If no crack is detected, prior to further flight, modify the upper and lower longeron halves in accordance with the service bulletin.

(ii) If any crack is detected, prior to further flight, accomplish the actions required by paragraphs (c)(1)(ii)(A) and (c)(1)(ii)(B) of this AD.

(A) Either replace the longeron with a new longeron in accordance with the service bulletin, or repair in accordance with a method approved by either the Manager, New York Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), FAA, Engine and Propeller Directorate; or Transport Canada Civil Aviation (or it's delegated agent). For a repair method to be approved by the Manager, New York ACO, as required by this paragraph, the Manager's approval letter must specifically reference this AD.

(B) Modify the upper and lower longeron halves in accordance with the service bulletin.

(2) For corrosion that exceeds the limits specified in the service bulletin: Accomplish the actions required in paragraphs (c)(1)(ii)(A) and (c)(1)(ii)(B) of this AD.

Alternative Methods of Compliance

(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, New York ACO, FAA, Engine and Propeller Directorate. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, New York ACO.

Note 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the New York ACO.

Special Flight Permits

(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.

Note 3: The subject of this AD is addressed in Canadian airworthiness directive CF–99–07, dated March 15, 1999.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on October 7, 1999.

D.L. Riggin,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 99–26870 Filed 10–13–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 96–NM–92–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Model A319 and A320 Series Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking; reopening of comment period.

SUMMARY: This document revises an earlier proposed airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to certain Airbus Model A320 series airplanes, that would have required repetitive inspections to detect cracking and delamination of the containers in which the off-wing emergency evacuation slides are stored, and corrective actions, if necessary. If cracking and delamination in excess of certain limits are found, the proposed AD would have required replacement of the slide with a modified slide, which would have terminated the inspection requirement. This new action revises the proposed rule by requiring an additional modification of the slides; accomplishment of both modifications of the slides would terminate the requirement for repetitive inspections. This proposal is prompted by issuance of mandatory continuing airworthiness information by a foreign civil airworthiness authority. The actions specified by this new proposed AD are intended to prevent the loss of the escape slides during flight, which could make the emergency exits located over each wing unusable and result in damage to the fuselage.

DATES: Comments must be received by November 3, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 96–NM–92–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 96–NM–92–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. 96–NM–92–AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056.

Discussion

A proposal to amend part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) to add an airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to certain Airbus Model A320 series airplanes, was published as a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) in the **Federal Register** on January 14, 1997 (62 FR 1861). That NPRM would have required repetitive inspections to detect cracking and delamination of the containers in which the left and right off-wing emergency evacuation slides are stored, and repair, if necessary. If cracking and delamination in excess of certain limits are found, that proposed AD also would have required replacement of the slide with a modified slide, which would have terminated the requirement for repetitive inspections; and replacement of the discrepant container with a serviceable container. That NPRM was prompted by a report indicating that a slide deployed during flight, which resulted in the loss of the slide and the container door. That condition, if not corrected, could make the emergency exits located over each wing unusable and result in damage to the fuselage.

Actions Since Issuance of Previous Proposal

Since the issuance of that NPRM, the Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, has advised the FAA that, although repackaging of the slide was previously thought to be sufficient to prevent loss of container doors and consequent loss of escape slides, inservice inspections have revealed that interference may still be present even with correctly packed slides. Therefore, the DGAC no longer considers that modification of the slides as described in Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1156, dated June 21, 1995, will eliminate the need for repetitive inspections of the slides.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

Airbus has issued Service Bulletin A320–25–1161, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999. The inspection procedures described in this service bulletin are identical to the previous revision. However, this revision includes Airbus Model A319 series airplanes in the effectivity, adds references to an additional modification of the offwing escape slides, and updates certain service bulletin references to later revisions.

Airbus also has issued Service Bulletin A320–25–1156, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999, which describes procedures for an additional modification of the offwing escape slides. The new modification involves structurally enhancing the container door by replacing frangible washers with solid ring retainers. The modification also involves inspecting each slide as described in A320–25–1161, Revision 01, repairing, if necessary, and repacking the slide. Accomplishment of this modification, in addition to the modification specified in the original service bulletin, would eliminate the need for the repetitive inspections of the escape slide containers. The Airbus service bulletin references Air Cruisers Service Bulletins 004–25–37, Revision 2, dated May 29, 1996, and 004–25–42, dated September 16, 1996, as additional sources of service information for accomplishment of the modifications.

Accomplishment of the actions specified in the Airbus service bulletins is intended to adequately address the identified unsafe condition. The DGAC classified Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1161, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999, as mandatory and issued French airworthiness directive 1999–232–132(B), dated June 2, 1999, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in France.

Conclusion

This supplemental NPRM proposes to add a requirement for modification of the slides in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1156, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999, which would terminate the requirement for repetitive inspections. This supplemental NPRM would also revise the applicability to add Airbus Model A319 series airplanes, and to exclude airplanes on which the terminating modification has been accomplished in production or in service. Since certain of these changes expand the scope of the originally proposed rule, the FAA has determined that it is necessary to reopen the comment period to provide additional opportunity for public comment.

Differences Between Proposed Rule and French AD

The proposed AD would differ from the parallel French airworthiness directive in that it would mandate the accomplishment of the modifications of the offwing escape slides within 5 years, which would constitute terminating action for the repetitive inspections required by this AD. 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 consistent with these conditions.

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 121 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD.

It would take approximately 5 work hours 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 proposed inspection on U.S. operators is estimated to be $36,300, or $300 per airplane, per inspection cycle.

It would take approximately 6 work hours per airplane to accomplish the proposed modifications, at an average labor rate of $60 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately $170 per airplane. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed modifications on U.S. operators is estimated to be $64,130, or $530 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 96–NM–92–AD.

Applicability: Model A319 and A320 series airplanes, certificated in any category; except airplanes on which Airbus Modifications 24850 and 25844 have been installed in production, or on which Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1156, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999, has been accomplished.

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 (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 prevent the loss of the escape slides during flight, which could make the emergency exits located over each wing unusable and result in damage to the fuselage, accomplish the following:

Inspections and Corrective Actions

(a) At the latest of the times specified in paragraphs (a)(1), (a)(2), and (a)(3) of this AD, as applicable: Perform a detailed visual inspection to detect cracking and delamination of each off-wing escape slide container, including the container door, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1161, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999. Repeat the inspection thereafter at intervals not to exceed 18 months, until accomplishment of the actions required by paragraph (d) of this AD.

(1) Within 500 flight hours after the effective date of this AD.

(2) Within 18 months after the last inspection in accordance with Airbus All Operator Telex 25–09, dated January 2, 1995, or Revision 1, dated February 16, 1995; or Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1161, dated June 21, 1995; if accomplished prior to the effective date of this AD.

(3) Within 18 months after modification of the offwing escape slides in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1156, dated June 21, 1995; if accomplished prior to the effective date of this AD.

Note 2: For the purposes of this AD, a detailed visual inspection is defined as: ''An intensive visual examination of a specific structural area, system, installation, or assembly to detect damage, failure, or irregularity. Available lighting is normally supplemented with a direct source of good lighting at intensity deemed appropriate by the inspector. Inspection aids such as mirror, magnifying lenses, etc., may be used. Surface cleaning and elaborate access procedures may be required.''

(b) If any crack or delamination is found during any inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD that does not exceed the limits specified in Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1161, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999: Prior to further flight, repair the crack or delamination in accordance with the service bulletin, and continue inspecting in accordance with paragraph (a) of this AD.

(c) If any crack or delamination is found during any inspection required by paragraph (a) of this AD that exceeds the limits specified in Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1161, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999: Prior to further flight, replace the discrepant container with a serviceable container in accordance with the service bulletin, and continue inspecting in accordance with paragraph (a) of this AD.

Terminating Modification

(d) Within 5 years after the effective date of this AD, modify the offwing escape slides (i.e., modifications, inspection, repair, and repacking) in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1156, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999. Modification of the escape slides constitutes terminating action for the repetitive inspections required by paragraph (a) of this AD.

Note 3: Airbus Service Bulletin A320–25–1156, Revision 01, dated February 2, 1999, references Air Cruisers Service Bulletins 004–25–37, Revision 2, dated May 29, 1996, and 004–25–42, dated September 16, 1996, as additional sources of service information for accomplishment of the modification of the offwing escape slides.

Alternative Methods of Compliance

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

Special Flight Permits

(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.

Note 5: The subject of this AD is addressed in French airworthiness directive 1999–232–132(B), dated June 2, 1999.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on October 7, 1999.

D.L. Riggin,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 99–26871 Filed 10–13–99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97–NM–298–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; McDonnell Douglas Model DC–9, DC–9–80, and C–9 (Military) Series Airplanes; Model MD–88 Airplanes; and Model MD–90 Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes the supersedure of an existing airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to certain McDonnell Douglas Model DC–9, DC–9–80, and C–9 (military) series airplanes; Model MD–88 airplanes; and MD–90 airplanes, that currently requires a visual check to determine the part and serial numbers of the upper lock link assembly of the nose landing gear (NLG); repetitive inspections of certain upper lock link assemblies to detect fatigue cracking; and replacement of the upper lock link assembly with an assembly made from aluminum forging material, if necessary. Such replacement would constitute terminating action for the requirements of this AD. The proposed AD would expand the