Compliance: Required within the next 50 hours time-in-service (TIS) after the effective date of this AD, unless already accomplished.

To prevent loss of engine power and fuel depletion during flight caused by a false fuel gauge reading, accomplish the following:

(a) Remove the lanyard (nylon type material) from the left-hand (LH) and right-hand (RH) fuel filler cap assembly in accordance with the INSTRUCTIONS section of Mooney Aircraft Corporation Service Bulletin M20–259, Issue Date: September 1, 1996.

(b) 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.

(c) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an equivalent level of safety may be approved by the Manager, Fort Worth Airplane Certification Office, 2601 Meacham Boulevard, Fort Worth, Texas 76193–0150. The request shall be forwarded through an appropriate FAA Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Fort Worth Airplane Certification Office.

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

(d) All persons affected by this directive may obtain copies of the document referred to herein upon request to Mooney Aircraft Corporation, Louis Schreiner Field, Kerrville, Texas, 78028; or may examine this document at the FAA, Central Region, Office of the Assistant Chief Counsel, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

Issued in Kansas City, Missouri, on March 20, 1997.

Larry E. Werth,

Acting Manager, Small Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 97–7679 Filed 3–25–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–U

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14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 96–NM–182–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Industrie Model A300–600 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 Industrie Model A300–600 series airplanes. This proposal would require repetitive eddy current inspections to detect cracks of the outer skin of the fuselage at certain frames, and repair or reinforcement of the structure at the frames, if necessary. This proposal also would require eventual reinforcement of the structure at certain frames, which, when accomplished, terminates the repetitive inspections. This proposal is prompted by a report indicating that fatigue cracks were found in the area of certain frames. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent such fatigue cracking, which could reduce the structural integrity of the airframe and result in rapid decompression of the airplane.

DATES: Comments must be received by May 5, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–103, Attention: Rules Docket No. 96–NM–182–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: Tim Backman, Aerospace Engineer, Standardization Branch, ANM–113, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056; telephone (206) 227–2797; fax (206) 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–182–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–103, Attention: Rules Docket No. 96–NM–182–AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055–4056.

Discussion

The Direction Generale de l'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, recently notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on certain Model A300–600 series airplanes. The DGAC advises that, during inspection of in-service Model A300 series airplanes, fatigue cracks were found after 18,000 flight cycles in the area of frames 28A and 30A, at left and right-hand stringer 30. Fatigue cracking in this area of the fuselage could reduce the structural integrity of the airframe and result in rapid decompression of the airplane.

Explanation of Relevant Service Information

Airbus has issued Service Bulletin A300–53–6045, dated March 21, 1995, as revised by Change Notice No. O.A., dated June 1, 1995, which describes procedures for repetitive eddy current inspections to detect cracks of the outer skin of the fuselage at frames 28A and 30A above stringer 30, and repair or reinforcement of the structure of the frames, if necessary.

Airbus also has issued Service Bulletin A300–53–6037, dated March 21, 1995, which describes procedures for reinforcement of the structure at frames 28 and 29, and frames 30 and 31, between stringers 29 and 30. Accomplishment of the reinforcement will limit the risk of cracking in these areas. Such reinforcement eliminates the need for the repetitive inspections.

The DGAC classified Airbus Service Bulletin A300–53–6045 as mandatory and issued French airworthiness directive (C/N) 95–244–191(B), dated December 6, 1995, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these airplanes in France. The DGAC

classified Airbus Service Bulletin A300–53–6037 as recommended.

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 repetitive eddy current inspections to detect cracks of the outer skin of the fuselage at frames 28A and 30A above stringer 30; and repair or reinforcement of the structure of the frames, if necessary. Additionally, the proposed AD would require eventual reinforcement of the structure at frames 28 and 29, and frames 30 and 31, between stringers 29 and 30. Accomplishment of this reinforcement constitutes terminating action for the repetitive inspections. The actions would be required to be accomplished in accordance with the service bulletins described previously.

Differences Between Proposed Rule and Service Bulletins

Operators should note that, unlike the procedures described in Airbus Service Bulletins A300–53–6045 and A300–53–6037, this proposed AD would not permit further flight if cracks are detected in the outer skin. The FAA has determined that, because of the safety implications and consequences associated with such cracking, any subject outer skin that is found to be cracked must be repaired or modified prior to further flight.

Operators should also note that the proposed AD would differ from Airbus FL Service Bulletin A300–53–6045 in that it would require the initial eddy current inspection to be accomplished prior to the accumulation of 14,100 total flight cycles, or within 12 months of the effective date of the AD, whichever occurs later. (The service bulletin recommends inspection prior to the accumulation of 18,000 flight cycles, or at the next ''C'' check, whichever occurs first.) In developing an appropriate compliance time for this action, the FAA considered not only the degree of urgency associated with addressing the subject unsafe condition, but the susceptibility of the outer skin of the fuselage to fatigue cracking, which could result in rapid decompression of the airplane. The FAA has also received reports of fatigue cracking on affected airplanes that had accumulated as few as 14,100 total flight cycles. In consideration of these items, the FAA finds that the initial eddy current inspection conducted at the proposed compliance time stated previously will better ensure that any detrimental effect associated with fatigue cracking will be identified and corrected prior to the time that it could adversely affect the outer skin of the fuselage.

Operators should also note that this AD proposes to mandate, within 5 years, the reinforcement described in Service Bulletin A300–53–6037 as terminating action for the repetitive inspections. [Incorporation of this terminating action of this service bulletin is optional in the French C/N 95–244–191(B).] The FAA has determined that long-term continued operational safety will be better assured by 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 reinforcement requirement is in consonance with these conditions.

Cost Impact

The FAA estimates that 34 Airbus Model A300–600 series airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD.

The eddy current inspection that is proposed by this AD would take approximately 1 work hour per airplane to accomplish, 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 $2,040, or $60 per airplane, per inspection cycle.

The reinforcement that is proposed in this AD would take approximately 93 work hours per airplane to accomplish, at an average labor rate of $60 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately $7,200 per airplane. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the proposed modification requirements of this AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be $434,520, or $12,780 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–182–AD.

Applicability: Model A300–600 series airplanes on which Airbus Modification 8683 was not accomplished during production, or on which Airbus Modification 8684 has not been installed; certificated in any category.

Note 1: Airbus Models A300 B2 and B4 series airplanes are not subject to the requirements of this AD.

Note 2: 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 fuselage outer skin at frames 28A and 30A, which could reduce the structural integrity of the airframe and result in rapid decompression of the airplane, accomplish the following actions:

(a) Prior to the accumulation of 14,100 total flight cycles, or within 12 months after the effective date of the AD, whichever occurs later, conduct an eddy current inspection to detect cracking of the fuselage outer skin at frames 28A and 30A above stringer 30, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A300–53–6045, dated March 21, 1995, as revised by Change Notice No. O.A., dated June 1, 1995.

(1) If no cracking is found, repeat the inspection thereafter at intervals not to exceed 4,500 flight cycles.

(2) If any cracking is found that is within the limits specified in the service bulletin, repair in accordance with paragraph 2.D. of the Accomplishment Instructions of Airbus Service Bulletin A300–53–6045, dated March 21, 1995, as revised by Change Notice No. O.A., dated June 1, 1995; or reinforce the structure at frames 28 and 29, and at frames 30 and 31, between stringers 29 and 30, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A300–53–6037, dated March 21, 1995.

1(i) If the repair is accomplished: After the repair, repeat the eddy current inspection thereafter at intervals not to exceed 4,500 flight cycles.

(ii) If the reinforcement is accomplished: Such reinforcement constitutes terminating action for the repetitive inspections required by this AD.

(3) If any cracking is found that is outside the limits specified in the service bulletin, prior to further flight, reinforce the structure at frames 28 and 29, and at frames 30 and 31, between stringers 29 and 30, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A300–53–6037, dated March 21, 1995. Such reinforcement constitutes terminating action for the repetitive inspections required by this AD.

(b) Within 5 years after the effective date of this AD, reinforce the structure at frames 28 and 29, and at frames 30 and 31, between stringers 29 and 30, in accordance with Airbus Service Bulletin A300–53–6037, dated March 21, 1995. Such reinforcement constitutes terminating action for the repetitive inspections required by 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, Standardization Branch, ANM–113, 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, Standardization Branch, ANM–113.

Note 3: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Standardization Branch, ANM–113.

(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.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on March 20, 1997.

Darrell M. Pederson,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 97–7681 Filed 3–25–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–U

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14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97–NM–06–AD]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Lockheed Model L–1011 Series Airplanes Equipped With Rolls-Royce Model RB.211–524 Series Engines

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 Lockheed Model L–1011 series airplanes, that currently requires several modifications of the engine high speed gearboxes. This action would require that a new modification be installed in lieu of one of those previously required. This proposal is prompted by a report indicating that one of the currently required modifications is not completely effective because it can create interference problems between the fireloop and a fuel line. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to reduce the possibility of a fire in the high speed gear boxes, and to ensure that any fire which may occur is readily detected by the flight crew.

DATES: Comments must be received by May 5, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM–103, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97-NM–06-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 Lockheed Aeronautical Systems Support Company, Field Support Department, Dept. 693, Zone 0755, 2251 Lake Park Drive, Smyrna, Georgia 30080; and Rolls-Royce plc, Technical Publications Department, P.O. Box 17, Parkside, Coventry CV1 2LZ, England. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Peters, Aerospace Engineer, Systems and Flight Test Branch, ACE–116A, FAA, Atlanta Aircraft Certification Office, Small Airplane Directorate, Campus Building, 1701 Columbia Avenue, Suite 2–160, College Park, Georgia 30337–2748; telephone (404) 305–7367; fax (404) 305–7348.

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.