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14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 95-CE-24-AD; Amendment 39-9267; AD 95-12-16]

Airworthiness Directives; Mooney Aircraft Corporation Model M20R Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This amendment supersedes priority letter Airworthiness Directive (AD) 95-07-04, which currently requires the following on certain Mooney Aircraft Corporation (Mooney) Model M20R airplanes: repetitively inspecting the exhaust system for cracks, replacing the exhaust system if any cracks are found, and reporting to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) any cracks found. This action retains the repetitive inspection requirement of AD 95-07-04 until the exhaust system is modified, and requires eventual modification of the exhaust system on the affected airplanes. Several reports of exhaust system cracks on Mooney Model M20R airplanes prompted this action. The actions specified by this AD are intended to prevent an airplane engine fire that could result from exhaust system cracks.

DATES: Effective June 22, 1995.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of June 22, 1995. Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before August 14, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the FAA, Central Region, Office of the Assistant Chief Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket 95-CE-24-AD, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

Service information that applies to this AD may be obtained from the Mooney Aircraft Corporation, Louis Schreiner Field, Kerrville, Texas 78028. This information may also be examined at the FAA, Central Region, Office of the Assistant Chief Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket 95-CE-24-AD, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106; or at the Office of the

Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Alma Ramirez-Hodge, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Airplane Certification Office, 2601 Meacham Boulevard, Fort Worth, Texas 76193-0150; telephone (817) 222-5147; facsimile (817) 223-5960.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On March 24, 1995, the FAA issued priority letter AD 95-07-04, which currently requires the following on certain Mooney Model M20R airplanes:

- Repetitively inspecting the exhaust system for cracks;
- Replacing the exhaust system if any cracks are found; and
- Reporting to the FAA any cracks found.

Accomplishment of this action is in accordance with section 5 and section 81 of the Mooney Model M20R Service and Maintenance Manual (section 78 in Service and Maintenance Manual revisions issued after April 1995).

Several (13) reports of exhaust system cracks on the affected airplanes prompted priority letter AD 95-07-04. The service time of the airplanes with cracks found was as low as 8 hours time-in-service. Investigation of the cracked exhaust systems revealed that these cracks formed in the exhaust header assembly, the muffler assembly, and the exhaust tailpipe assembly, specifically at the spot welds.

The exhaust system header assembly on the Model M20R airplanes is located near the fuel lines. The high temperatures emanating from exhaust system cracks could cause an airplane fire with this close proximity to the fuel lines.

Mooney issued Service Bulletin M20-257, Revision A, dated March 21, 1995, which references repetitive inspections of the exhaust system on the affected Model M20R airplanes. The exhaust system on the affected airplanes consists of the following parts:

- Exhaust Header Assembly: part number 630079-501/-502
- Muffler Assembly: part number 630088-501; and
- Exhaust Tail Pipe Assembly: part number 630087-501/-502

Since the FAA issued priority letter AD 95-07-04, Mooney has developed an exhaust system modification that, when incorporated, would eliminate the need for the repetitive inspections required by the current AD. Mooney issued Instructions—Retrofit Kit, part number (P/N) 940095-501-1, dated March 31, 1995, and Special Letter 95-1, dated April 20, 1995, which specify instructions for incorporating this

exhaust system modification on Mooney Model M20R airplanes. In addition, Mooney incorporated the instructions of both the above documents in Instructions—Retrofit Kit, P/N 940095-501-1, Revised April 21, 1995. This modification is referenced in Mooney Service Bulletin M20-257, Revision B, dated April 5, 1995.

After examining the circumstances and reviewing all available information related to the accidents described above, the FAA has determined that the modification described above should be incorporated on certain Mooney Model M20R airplanes, and that AD action should be taken in order to prevent an airplane engine fire that could result from exhaust system cracks.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop in other Mooney M20R airplanes of the same type design, this AD supersedes priority letter AD 95-07-04 with a new AD that (1) retains the requirement of repetitively inspecting the exhaust system for cracks until the exhaust system is modified; and (2) requires modifying the exhaust system if cracks are found and at a certain time period if cracks aren't found. This exhaust system modification eliminates the repetitive inspection requirement. Accomplishment of the exhaust system modification is in accordance with either (1) Mooney Instructions—Retrofit Kit, P/N 940095-501-1, Revised April 21, 1995; or (2) both Mooney Instructions—Retrofit Kit, P/N 940095-501-1, dated March 31, 1995, and Mooney Special Letter 95-1, dated April 20, 1995.

Since a situation exists (possible exhaust leaks near the fuel lines) that requires the immediate adoption of this regulation, it is found that notice and opportunity for public prior comment hereon are impracticable, and that good cause exists for making this amendment effective in less than 30 days.

Comments Invited

Although this action is in the form of a final rule that involves requirements affecting immediate flight safety and, thus, was not preceded by notice and opportunity to comment, comments are invited on this rule. Interested persons are invited to comment on this 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 will be considered, and this rule may be amended in light of the comments received. Factual information that