

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-103, Attention: Rules Docket No. 95-NM-48-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 McDonnell Douglas Corporation, 3855 Lakewood Boulevard, Long Beach, California 90846, Attention: Technical Publications Business Administration, Department C1-L51 (2-60). This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington; or at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Cecil, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120L, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California 90712; telephone (310) 627-5322; fax (310) 627-5210.

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 95-NM-48-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. 95-NM-48-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

Discussion

The FAA has received reports from operators of Model DC-10 series airplanes of failed attachments on the lower vertical stabilizer. These attachments were located on the forward and aft flanges of the banjo No. 4 fitting and the pylon carry-through cap. Additionally, one operator reported finding cracks in the forward flange of banjo No. 4 at the pylon carry-through cap. The attachments on the aft flange of these airplanes also had failed. Lengths of the cracks varied from 1.0 inch to 3.75 inches on airplanes that had accumulated between 20,903 and 32,313 landings. Investigation revealed that the broken steel attachments failed due to cracking, which was caused by stress corrosion fatigue. Such cracking, if not detected and corrected in a timely manner, could result in loss of fail safe capability of the vertical stabilizer.

The FAA has reviewed and approved McDonnell Douglas DC-10 Service Bulletin 55-23, Revision 1, dated December 17, 1993, which describes procedures for accomplishing an eddy current inspection to detect cracking of the forward and aft flanges and bolt holes of the banjo No. 4 fitting, and pylon carry-through cap of the lower vertical stabilizer. The service bulletin also describes procedures for replacement of 12 attachments located on the banjo No. 4 fitting and pylon carry-through cap with new attachments for airplanes on which no cracking is found. The new attachments are made from a higher strength and more corrosion resistant material. Accomplishment of the replacement will minimize the possibility of cracking and failure of the attachments. The manufacturer recommends that these actions be accomplished within 2,200 landings (approximately 5 years).

Although the FAA has approved the technical content as well as the intent of the McDonnell Douglas service bulletin, it has determined that, prior to the time that the eddy current inspection (recommended by the manufacturer) is accomplished, visual inspections also must be accomplished to detect cracking of the 12 attachments

located in the banjo No. 4 fitting. In order to ensure that any cracking is detected and corrected in a timely manner, the FAA finds that such visual inspections should be conducted annually.

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, initially, repetitive visual inspections to detect failures of the 12 attachments located in the banjo No. 4 fittings. These visual inspections would be required to be accomplished in accordance with McDonnell Douglas Nondestructive Testing Manual Chapter 20-10-00 or McDonnell Douglas Nondestructive Testing Standard Practice Manual, Part 09.

Additionally, this proposed AD would require an eddy current inspection to detect cracking of the forward and aft flanges and bolt holes of the fitting of the vertical stabilizer and pylon carry-through cap; replacement of the attachments with new attachments if no cracking is found; and repair if cracking is found. The eddy current inspection and replacement procedures would be required to be accomplished in accordance with McDonnell Douglas DC-10 Service Bulletin 55-23, described previously. Repair procedures would be required to be accomplished in accordance with a method approved by the FAA. Accomplishment of the replacement would constitute terminating action for the proposed inspections.

As a result of recent communications with the Air Transport Association (ATA) of America, the FAA has learned that, in general, some operators may misunderstand the legal effect of AD's on airplanes that are identified in the applicability provision of the AD, but that have been altered or repaired in the area addressed by the AD. The FAA points out that all airplanes identified in the applicability provision of an AD are legally subject to the AD. If an airplane has been altered or repaired in the affected area in such a way as to affect compliance with the AD, the owner or operator is required to obtain FAA approval for an alternative method of compliance with the AD, in accordance with the paragraph of each AD that provides for such approvals. A note has been included in this notice to clarify this long-standing requirement.

There are approximately 420 Model DC-10-10, -15, -30, -40 series airplanes and KC-10A (military) airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 237 airplanes of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD.