worldwide attention on aging air carrier fleets. As a result of this event, a joint effort between the air carrier industry and regulatory authorities was established to address the continued airworthiness of the air transport fleet. This effort led to the establishment of the Airworthiness Assurance Task Force (AATF).

The AATF's activities focused on five major efforts that were a direct result of airworthiness issues presented by airlines and aircraft manufacturers at the First International Conference on Aging Airplanes, which was hosted by the FAA in June 1988. One of the issues presented at the conference was the need to ensure an adequate communications system between airlines, manufacturers, and the FAA. This task was assigned to the Improved Airworthiness Communications Steering Committee (IACSC) Data Collection Subcommittee of the AATF.

The FAA attended joint FAA/industry meetings with the IACSC to discuss problems associated with §§ 121.703, 121.705, 145.63, 145.79, and the Service Difficulty Report (SDR) program. Issues addressed in the March 21, 1991. General Accounting Office (GAO) report entitled Changes Needed in FAA 's Service Difficulty Reporting Program and written proposals from IACSC surfaced as points of discussion during the FAA/industry meetings. Members of the air carrier industry and FAA personnel expressed concern that, because of a lack of a standardized reporting format, there are varied interpretations of what is required to be reported. It was also noted that report information submitted by air carriers is inconsistent from airline to airline and results in incomplete data. In addition, air carriers voiced concern about the timeliness of the FAA's dissemination of SDR information. The IACSC noted that the manual data entry of reports into the SDRS delays the distribution of information to the airlines.

The IACSC recommended establishing a new §121.704. This new section specifically would address defects in aircraft structures and problems normally associated with aging aircraft. The IACSC further suggested that the reporting requirements of §§ 121.703(a)(14) and 121.703(a)(15) relating to aircraft structures be revised and transferred to the proposed new section. The proposed reporting requirements would enable collection of information on discrepancies found in primary structure or principal structural elements. In addition, information on discrepancies found in composite materials that comprise primary

structure or principal structural elements would be collected.

The IACSC also suggested revising §§ 145.63 and 145.79 to allow part 121 certificate holders to require certificated repair stations to submit the reports required under proposed §§ 121.703 and 121.704 when a repair station discovers a malfunction or defect in a certificate holder's aircraft. This change would serve to reduce the number of duplicate reports on the same problem from air carriers and repair stations, who presently are both required to report the occurrence.

The IACSC was realigned as the International Airworthiness **Communications Working Group** (IACWG) under the Aviation **Rulemaking Advisory Committee** (ARAC). The ARAC was established under FAA Order No. 1110.119, dated February 22, 1991, to advise the FAA on aviation safety-related rulemaking activity on a wide range of issues. Following the evaluation of the IACWG's recommendation for the revision of part 121, the ARAC tasked the group with preparing similar recommendations for operations conducted under parts 125, 127, and 135.

During preparation of the recommendations for parts 125, 127, and 135, the IACWG noted that the current reliability reporting requirements of §§ 127.315 and 135.417 are also unnecessary. There is no equivalent section in part 125. Therefore, the IACWG suggested deleting §§ 127.315 and 135.417, which would be consistent with the IACWG's proposed deletion of § 121.705. Currently, reliability information for operations conducted under these parts must be monitored in accordance with §§ 127.136 and 135.431.

The IACSC also was of the opinion that the current reporting requirements of § 121.705 are unnecessary because the data reported is reliability information that does not affect flight safety. The subcommittee further stated that this regulation does not provide sufficient guidance on the type or scope of the information to be reported; therefore, reporting is inconsistent. Reliability information currently must be monitored in accordance with § 121.373. Consequently, IACSC did not believe § 121.705 was necessary and suggested that it be deleted.

Subsequent discussions within the working group revealed that § 121.705(a) would need to remain in the regulation so that PMI's would continue to receive timely information from air carriers on mechanical interruptions of flights caused by malfunctions or defects that are not required to be reported to the SDRS. The working group, therefore, recommended deleting only §§ 121.705 (b) and (c), 127.315(b), and 135.417(b), which relate to premature engine removals and inflight propeller featherings.

The Proposed Rule

Based on the earlier joint discussions with representatives of the air carrier industry, recommendations from the ARAC, and an internal review of the SDR program, the FAA recognizes that improvements to reporting requirements and the SDR program are necessary. This proposed rule presents actions to correct deficiencies cited during the FAA/industry meetings and in the GAO report, and was developed based on the recommendations from the ARAC.

This proposed rule would modify the current reporting requirements for air carriers and repair stations to standardize report information. The proposed rule also would explicitly permit the submission of the required reports in an electronic form to encourage reporting that will give the FAA information on a near real-time basis. In addition, the proposed rule would revise the current reporting requirements for air carriers to include the reporting of certain occurrences or detections of failures, malfunctions, or defects of aircraft, aircraft engines. systems, and components that occur during ground operations and that could affect the safety of flight operations.

The proposed rule would also allow part 121, 125, 127, or 135 certificate holders to require a certificated domestic or foreign repair station to submit operational and structural difficulty reports to the FAA on behalf of the certificate holder when the repair station discovers defects or unairworthy conditions. This provision would eliminate duplicate reporting of a problem by the air carrier and the repair station. The proposed rule would delete §§ 121.705 (b) and (c), 127.315(b), and 135.417(b), removing the requirement for submitting summary reports on premature engine removals and in-flight propeller featherings because this information is reliability-related data rather than safety-of-flight data. The proposed rule also would add new §§ 121.704, 125.410, 127.314, and 135.416 to specifically address the reporting of structural defects and problems normally associated with aging aircraft.

Sections 121.703, 125.409, 127.313, and 135.415 would be revised to focus on the reporting of operational defects, and new \$\$ 121.704, 125.410, 127.314,