

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to certain McDonnell Douglas Model DC-9-80 series airplanes and Model MD-88 airplanes. This action requires an inspection to detect chafing of or damage to the wire bundle in the overhead switch panel of the cockpit, application of spiral wrap to the wire bundle, and corrective actions, if necessary. This amendment is prompted by reports of chafed and shorted wires that resulted in smoke emanating from the overhead switch panel of the cockpit. The actions specified in this AD are intended to prevent the potential for fire and uncontrolled smoke throughout the cockpit as a result of chafing and shorting in the electrical wire bundles.

DATES: Effective May 19, 1995.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of May 19, 1995.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before July 3, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-103, Attention: Rules Docket No. 95-NM-68-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

The service information referenced in this AD may be obtained from McDonnell Douglas Corporation, P.O. Box 1771, Long Beach, California 90801-1771, Attention: Business Unit Manager, Technical Administrative Support, Dept. L51, M.C. 2-98. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington; or at the FAA, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, Transport Airplane Directorate, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: J. Kirk Baker, Aerospace Engineer, Systems and Equipment Branch, ANM-130L, FAA, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California 90712-4137; telephone (310) 627-5345; fax (310) 627-5210.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Recently, the FAA has received reports of smoke emanating from the overhead switch panel of the cockpit of Model DC-9-80 series airplanes and Model MD-88 airplanes. Investigation revealed that the cause of the smoke may be attributed to

chafing of a wire bundle in the overhead switch panel of the cockpit. This chafed wire bundle made contact with the electrical connector of the cabin temperature indicator, which resulted in a short circuit. This condition, if not corrected, could result in the potential for fire and uncontrolled smoke throughout the cockpit.

The FAA has reviewed and approved McDonnell Douglas DC-9 Alert Service Bulletin DC9-24A157, dated April 11, 1995, which describes procedures for a one-time visual inspection to detect chafing of the wire bundle in the overhead switch panel of the cockpit, application of spiral wrap, repair of chafed wire insulation, and splicing of damaged wires. The effectivity listing of this service bulletin includes certain Model DC-9, DC-9-80, and C-9 (military) series airplanes, and Model MD-88 airplanes. This service bulletin recommends a compliance time of 6 months.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other airplanes of the same type design, this AD is being issued to prevent the potential for fire and uncontrolled smoke throughout the cockpit. This AD requires a one-time visual inspection to detect chafing of or damage to the wire bundle in the overhead switch panel of the cockpit, application of spiral wrap to the wire bundle, repair of chafed wire insulation, and splicing of damaged wires. The actions are required to be accomplished in accordance with the service bulletin described previously.

Operators should note that, although the service bulletin recommends that the inspection be performed within 6 months, this AD requires that it be performed within 90 days. In light of the consequences of fire or smoke in the cockpit, the FAA finds that the 90-day compliance time is appropriate to ensure the safety of this group of airplanes.

This AD does not apply to Model DC-9 and C-9 (military) series airplanes because the wires/wire bundles on these airplanes are manufactured of a stronger material than those on Model DC-9-80 series airplanes and Model MD-88 airplanes, and are therefore less susceptible to the subject damage. Additionally, this AD does not apply to Model MD-90-30 series airplanes. Since these airplanes are relatively new, the FAA does not anticipate that the wire bundles on these airplanes would be chafed as severely as those on the Model DC-9 series airplanes, which have been in service for a much longer period of time. Further, the reported incidents of smoke in the cockpit

occurred only on Model DC-9-80 series airplanes and Model MD-88 airplanes. Therefore, the FAA is considering further rulemaking action to revise this AD to require modification of the wire bundles on Model DC-9-80 series airplanes and Model MD-88 airplanes. However, the proposed compliance time for the modification is sufficiently long so that notice and time for public comment would not be impracticable.

This is considered to be interim action. The manufacturer has advised that it currently is developing a modification that will positively address the unsafe condition addressed by this AD. Once this modification is developed, approved, and available, the FAA may consider additional rulemaking.

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 rule to clarify this long-standing requirement.

Since a situation exists that requires the immediate adoption of this regulation, it is found that notice and opportunity for prior public 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 flight safety and, thus, was not preceded by notice and an opportunity for public 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 shall identify the Rules Docket number and be submitted in triplicate to the address specified under the caption **ADDRESSES**. 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