

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

(c) 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 December 28, 1994.

**S.R. Miller,**

*Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.*

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#### 14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 94-NM-197-AD]

#### Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 727 Series Airplanes

**AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

**SUMMARY:** This document proposes the superseding of an existing airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to certain Boeing Model 727 series airplanes, that currently requires repetitive visual inspections to detect cracking in the elevator rear spar and repair, if necessary. It also provides for an optional terminating action for the repetitive inspections. This action would add an additional one-time inspection of certain airplanes for clearance between the shear plate and the radii of the rear spar; and would provide additional instructions for the terminating action. This proposal is prompted by reports of cracking in the rear spar of the elevator at the hinge fitting attachment of the control tab and reports of loose hinge fittings at the crack locations. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent cracking of the elevator rear spar, which could cause excessive free play of the elevator control tab and possible tab flutter, and could result in loss of controllability of the airplane.

**DATES:** Comments must be received by March 1, 1995.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-103,

Attention: Rules Docket No.94-NM-197-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 Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, P.O. Box 3707, Seattle, Washington 98124-2207. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Walter Sippel, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-121S, Seattle Aircraft Certification Office, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (206) 227-2774; fax (206) 227-1181.

#### 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 94-NM-197-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.

94-NM-197-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

#### Discussion

On October 30, 1987, the FAA issued AD 87-24-03, amendment 39-5769 (52 FR 43742, November 16, 1987), applicable to certain Boeing Model 727 series airplanes, to require repetitive visual inspection to detect cracking of the elevator rear spar, and repair, if necessary. That action was prompted by reports of cracking in the elevator rear spar at the control tab hinge fitting attachment, and loose hinge fittings at the crack locations. The requirements of that AD are intended to detect cracking in the elevator rear spar which, if not corrected, could lead to loss of controllability of the airplane. -

Since the issuance of that AD, there have been several reports of cracking in the radii at the tab hinge fitting of the rear spar, and reports of loose hinge fittings at the crack locations on airplanes that were modified in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 727-55-0087, dated June 20, 1986. The modification described in that Boeing service bulletin was considered to be terminating action for the repetitive inspection requirements of AD 87-24-03. The manufacturer has advised that the cause of this cracking is attributable to continued contact between the shear plate and the radii of the elevator rear spar. Cracking in this area, if not corrected, could cause excessive free play of the elevator control tab and possible tab flutter, and could result in loss of controllability of the airplane.-

The FAA has reviewed and approved Boeing Service Bulletin 727-55-0087, Revision 1, dated March 31, 1994, which describes procedures for continued repetitive visual inspections to detect cracking of the elevator rear spar, and repair, if necessary. For airplanes that have been modified in accordance with Boeing Service Bulletin 727-55-0087, dated June 20, 1986, the service bulletin describes procedures for an additional one-time inspection to ensure clearance between the shear plate and the rear spar radii. Additionally, for all other airplanes, Revision 1 of this service bulletin provides instructions for accomplishing an improved modification or repair that would eliminate the need for repetitive inspections.

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 supersede AD 87-24-03 to require continued repetitive visual inspections to detect cracking of the elevator rear spar, and repair, if necessary. However,