

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Aviation Administration****14 CFR Part 39****[Docket No. 91-CE-45-AD]****Airworthiness Directives; de Havilland DHC-6 Series Airplanes****AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.**ACTION:** Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: This document proposes to supersede Airworthiness Directive (AD) 78-26-02, which currently requires repetitively inspecting the fuselage side frame flanges at Fuselage Station (FS) 218.125 and FS 219.525 for cracks on certain de Havilland DHC-6 series airplanes, and repairing or replacing any cracked part. The Federal Aviation Administration's policy on aging commuter-class aircraft is to eliminate or, in certain instances, reduce the number of certain repetitive short-interval inspections when improved parts or modifications are available. The proposed action would require modifying the fuselage side frames at the referenced FS areas as terminating action for the repetitive inspections that are currently required by AD 78-26-02. The actions specified in the proposed AD are intended to prevent failure of the fuselage because of cracks in the fuselage side frames, which, if not detected and corrected, could result in loss of control of the airplane.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before October 16, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Central Region, Office of the Assistant Chief Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 91-CE-45-AD, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106. Comments may be inspected at this location between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, holidays excepted.

Service information that applies to the proposed AD may be obtained from de Havilland, Inc., 123 Garratt Boulevard, Downsview, Ontario, Canada, M3K 1Y5. This information also may be examined at the Rules Docket at the address above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jon Hjelm, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, New York Aircraft Certification Office, 10 Fifth Street, 3rd Floor, Valley Stream, New York 11581; telephone (516) 256-7523; facsimile (516) 568-2716.

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 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, 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 that summarizes 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 No. 91-CE-45-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, Central Region, Office of the Assistant Chief Counsel, Attention: Rules Docket No. 91-CE-45-AD, Room 1558, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

Discussion

The FAA has determined that reliance on critical repetitive inspections on aging commuter-class airplanes carries an unnecessary safety risk when a design change exists that could eliminate or, in certain instances, reduce the number of those critical inspections. In determining what inspections are critical, the FAA considers (1) the safety consequences if the known problem is not detected by the inspection; (2) the reliability of the inspection such as the probability of not detecting the known problem; (3) whether the inspection area is difficult to access; and (4) the possibility of damage to an adjacent structure as a result of the problem.

These factors have led the FAA to establish an aging commuter-class aircraft policy that requires incorporating a known design change when it could replace a critical repetitive inspection. With this policy in mind, the FAA conducted a review of existing AD's that apply to de Havilland DHC-6 series airplanes. Assisting the FAA in this review were (1) de Havilland; (2) the Regional Airlines Association (RAA); and (3) several operators of the affected airplanes.

From this review, the FAA has identified AD 78-26-02, Amendment 39-3370, as one that should be superseded with a new AD that would require a modification that could eliminate the need for short-interval and critical repetitive inspections. AD 78-26-02 currently requires repetitively inspecting the fuselage side frame flanges at Fuselage Station (FS) 218.125 and FS 219.525 on certain de Havilland DHC-6 series airplanes, and repairing or replacing any cracked part.

De Havilland Service Bulletin (SB) No. 6/371, dated June 2, 1978, specifies procedures for inspecting, repairing, and modifying (Modification Nos. 6/1461 and 6/1462) the fuselage side frame flanges at FS 218.125 and FS 219.525. Modification No. 6/1461 introduces fuselage side frames manufactured from material having improved stress corrosion properties at FS 218.125, and Modification No. 6/1462 introduces fuselage side frames of this material at FS 219.525.

This airplane model is manufactured in Canada and is type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of Section 21.29 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.29) and the bilateral airworthiness agreement between the United States and Canada. Pursuant to this bilateral airworthiness agreement, Transport Canada has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above.

Based on its aging commuter-class aircraft policy and after reviewing all available information, the FAA has determined that AD action should be taken to eliminate the repetitive short-interval inspections required by AD 78-26-02, Amendment 39-3370, and to prevent failure of the fuselage because of cracks in the fuselage side frames, which, if not detected and corrected, could result in loss of control of the airplane.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop in other de Havilland DHC-6 series airplanes of the same type design without Modification Nos. 6/1461 and 6/1462 incorporated, the proposed AD