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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Aviation Administration

#### 14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 98-SW-63-AD]

#### Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Model SA. 315B Helicopters

**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 Eurocopter France Model SA. 315B helicopters, that currently requires an initial and repetitive visual inspections and modification, if necessary, of the horizontal stabilizer spar tube (spar tube). This action would require the same corrective actions as the existing AD, and would require an additional dye-penetrant inspection of the half-shell attachment clamps (clamps). This proposal is prompted by an in-service report of fatigue cracks that initiated from corrosion pits. The actions specified by the proposed AD are intended to prevent fatigue failure of the spar tube, separation of the horizontal stabilizer and impact with the main or tail rotor, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before January 7, 2000.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 98-SW-63-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137. 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 American Eurocopter Corporation, 2701 Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, Texas 75053-4005, telephone (972) 641-3460, fax (972) 641-3527. This information may be examined at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Richard Monschke, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Fort Worth, Texas 76137, telephone (817) 222-5116, fax (817) 222-5961.

#### 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 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 No. 98-SW-63-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, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas, 76137.

##### Discussion

The Direction Generale de L'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on Eurocopter France Model SA. 315B helicopters. The DGAC advises that fatigue failure of the spar tube can result in separation of the horizontal stabilizer and impact with the main or tail rotor, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

Eurocopter France has issued Eurocopter France Service Bulletin No. 55.01, Revision 4, dated May 4, 1998,

which specifies initial and repetitive visual inspections, modification of the horizontal stabilizer spar tube if necessary, and a one-time dye penetrant inspection of the half shell attachment clamps with repetitive visual inspections of those clamps. The DGAC classified this service bulletin as mandatory and issued DGAC AD 96-277-037(A)R2, dated July 29, 1998, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters in France.

On June 2, 1998, the FAA issued AD 98-12-21, Amendment 39-10575 (63 FR 31610), to require an initial and repetitive visual inspections and modification, if necessary, of the horizontal stabilizer spar tube. That action was prompted by an in-service report of fatigue cracks that initiated from corrosion pits. The requirements of that AD are intended to prevent fatigue failure of the spar tube, separation of the horizontal stabilizer and impact with the main or tail rotor, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

Since the issuance of that AD, the DGAC has advised that the clamps should be inspected for cracks and replaced if a crack is found. If no crack is found, a safety wire should be wrapped around each clamp so that the clamp is held together in the event of clamp failure.

This helicopter model is manufactured in France 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 applicable bilateral airworthiness agreement. Pursuant to this bilateral airworthiness agreement, the DGAC has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above. The FAA has examined the findings of the DGAC, reviewed all available information, and determined that AD action is necessary for products of this type design that are certificated for operation in the United States.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other Eurocopter France Model SA. 315B helicopters of the same type design, the proposed AD would supersede AD 98-12-21 to require an initial and repetitive visual inspections and modification, if necessary, of the spar tube, as well as installing safety wire around each attachment clamp.

The FAA estimates that 28 helicopters of U.S. registry would be affected by this proposed AD, that it would take approximately:

- 0.5 work hour per helicopter to accomplish the inspections;

- 3 work hours per helicopter to accomplish the modification; and
  - 0.5 work hour per helicopter to inspect and fit the safety wire;
- and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately \$1,100 per helicopter. Based on these figures, the total cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$37,520.

The regulations proposed herein would not have substantial direct effects on the States, on the relationship between the national government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. Therefore, in accordance with Executive Order 12612, it is determined that this proposal would not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify that this proposed regulation (1) is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866; (2) is not a "significant rule" under the DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979); and (3) if promulgated, will not have a significant economic impact, positive or negative, on a substantial number of small entities under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act. A copy of the draft regulatory evaluation prepared for this action is contained in the Rules Docket. A copy of it may be obtained by contacting the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption ADDRESSES.

#### List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Safety.

#### The Proposed Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration proposes to amend part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) as follows:

#### PART 39—AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

#### § 39.13 [Amended]

2. Section 39.13 is amended by removing Amendment 39-10575 (63 FR 31610, June 10, 1998), and by adding a

new airworthiness directive (AD), to read as follows:

**Eurocopter France:** Docket No. 98-SW-63-AD. Supersedes AD 98-12-21, Amendment 39-10575, Docket No. 98-SW-02-AD.

**Applicability:** Model SA. 315B helicopters with horizontal stabilizers, part number (P/N) 315A35-10-000-1, 315A35-10-000-2, or higher dash numbers, installed, certificated in any category.

**Note 1:** This AD applies to each helicopter identified in the preceding applicability provision, regardless of whether it has been otherwise modified, altered, or repaired in the area subject to the requirements of this AD. For helicopters that have been modified, altered, or repaired so that the performance of the requirements of this AD is affected, the owner/operator must request approval for an alternative method of compliance in accordance with paragraph (f) of this AD. The request should include an assessment of the effect of the modification, alteration, or repair on the unsafe condition addressed by this AD; and, if the unsafe condition has not been eliminated, the request should include specific proposed actions to address it.

**Compliance:** Required as indicated, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent fatigue failure of the spar tube, separation of the horizontal stabilizer and impact with the main or tail rotor, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter, accomplish the following:

(a) Before further flight:

(1) Inspect the aircraft records and the horizontal stabilizer installation to determine whether Modification 072214 (installation of the spar tube without play) or Modification 072215 (adding two half-shells on the spar) has been accomplished.

(2) If Modification 072214 has not been installed, comply with paragraphs 2.A., 2.B.1), 2.B.2)a), and 2.B.2)b) of the Accomplishment Instructions of Eurocopter France Service Bulletin No. 55.01, Revision 4, dated May 4, 1998 (SB). If the fit and dimensions of the components specified in paragraph 2.B.2)a) exceed the tolerances in the applicable structural repair manual, replace with airworthy parts.

(3) If Modification 072215 has not been installed, first comply with paragraphs 2.A., 2.B.1), and 2.B.3), and then comply with paragraph 2.B.2)c) of the Accomplishment Instructions of the SB.

**Note 2:** Modification kit P/N 315A-07-0221571 contains the necessary materials to accomplish this modification.

(b) Before the first flight of each day:

(1) Visually inspect the installation of the half-shells, the horizontal stabilizer supports, and the horizontal stabilizer for corrosion or cracks. Repair any corroded parts in accordance with the applicable maintenance manual. Replace any cracked components with airworthy parts before further flight.

(2) Confirm that there is no play in the horizontal stabilizer supports by lightly shaking the horizontal stabilizer. If play is detected, comply with paragraphs 2.A. and 2.B.2)a) of the Accomplishment Instructions of the SB. If the fit and dimensions of the

components specified in paragraph 2.B.2)a) exceed the tolerances in the applicable structural repair manual, replace with airworthy parts before further flight.

(c) At intervals not to exceed 400 hours time-in-service (TIS) or four calendar months, whichever occurs first, inspect and lubricate the spar tube attachment bolts.

(d) Within 90 calendar days and thereafter at intervals not to exceed 24 calendar months, visually inspect the inside of the horizontal spar tube in accordance with paragraph 2.A. and 2.B.1) of the Accomplishment Instructions of the SB.

(1) If corrosion is found inside the tube, other than in the half-shell area, replace the tube with an airworthy tube within the next 500 hours TIS or 18 calendar months, whichever occurs first.

(2) If corrosion is found inside the tube in the half-shell area, apply a protective treatment as described in paragraph 2.B.1(b) of the Accomplishment Instructions of the SB.

(e) Within 30 calendar days, perform a one-time dye-penetrant inspection for cracking on the 4 attachment clamps (See No. 11 on Figure 3 of the SB) of the half-shells as shown in Figure 3 of the SB. If a crack is found in any clamp, replace the cracked clamp with an airworthy clamp. If no crack is found, safety wire the clamp as shown in Detail C in the SB using two wraps of 0.6-mm or 0.8 mm (.023 or .032 inch) diameter lockwire (See No. 21 on Figure 3 of the SB) around the clamp so that the clamp is held together in the event of clamp failure. After installing the safety wire, inspect the clamps before the first flight of each day in accordance with paragraph (b)(1) of this AD.

(f) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used if approved by the Manager, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate. Operators shall submit their requests through an FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may concur or comment and then send it to the Manager, Rotorcraft Standards Staff.

**Note 3:** Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Rotorcraft Standards Staff.

(g) 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 helicopter to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

**Note 4:** The subject of this AD is addressed in Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile (France) AD 96-277-037(A)R2, dated July 29, 1998.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on November 1, 1999.

**Eric Bries,**

*Acting Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.*

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