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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2012-0774; Directorate Identifier 2010-SW-057-AD; Amendment 39-17302; AD 2012-26-07]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: We are adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for Eurocopter France (Eurocopter) Model AS350BA helicopters with certain AERAZUR emergency flotation gear container assemblies installed. This AD requires replacing each affected emergency flotation gear container assembly (container assembly) at specified time limits based on the date of manufacture. This AD was prompted because container assemblies with an intended operating limitation of 10 years may not have been replaced because the limit is no longer recorded in the Maintenance Program. The actions of this AD are intended to prevent failure of the emergency container assembly because of age and subsequent damage to the helicopter and injury to the occupants after an emergency water landing.

DATES: This AD is effective February 11, 2013.

ADDRESSES: For service information identified in this AD, contact American Eurocopter Corporation, 2701 Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, TX 75053-4005, telephone (800) 232-0323, fax (972) 641-3710, or at <http://www.eurocopter.com>. You may review the referenced service information at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

Examining the AD Docket

You may examine the AD docket on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> or in person at the Docket Operations Office between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The AD docket contains this AD, any incorporated-by-reference service information, the economic evaluation, any comments received, and other information. The street address for the Docket Operations Office (phone: 800-647-5527) is U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket

Operations Office, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gary Roach, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Regulations and Policy Group, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Fort Worth, Texas 76137, telephone (817) 222-5130, fax (817) 222-5961, email gary.b.roach@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Discussion

On July 26, 2012, at 77 FR 43734, the Federal Register published our notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM), which proposed to amend 14 CFR part 39 to include an AD that would apply to Eurocopter Model AS350BA helicopters with AERAZUR left-hand emergency flotation gear container assembly (container assembly), part number (P/N) 158170 or 158210-1, or right-hand container assembly, P/N 158171 or 158215-1, installed. That NPRM proposed to require replacing each container assembly at specified time limits based on the date of manufacture. The proposed requirements were intended to prevent failure of the emergency container assembly because of age and subsequent damage to the helicopter and injury to the occupants after an emergency water landing.

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union, issued EASA AD No. 2008-0189, dated October 10, 2008, to correct an unsafe condition for the Eurocopter Model AS350BA helicopters with certain AERAZUR emergency flotation gear installed. EASA advises that the container assemblies have an operating life limit of 10 years from the date of manufacture. The EASA AD states that "as of June 2006, this limit is no longer recorded in the Maintenance Program; therefore, after June 2006, container assemblies having already exceeded the 10-year limit could have not been replaced yet." The EASA AD also states that "floating performance of a helicopter may prove to be insufficient in the event of ditching, in case of failure of a container assembly being operated beyond its operating time limit."

Comments

We gave the public the opportunity to participate in developing this AD, but we received no comments on the NPRM (77 FR 43734, July 26, 2012).

FAA's Determination

These helicopters have been approved by the aviation authority of France and are approved for operation in the United States. Pursuant to our bilateral agreement with France, EASA, its technical representative, has notified us of the unsafe condition described in the EASA AD. We are issuing this AD because we evaluated all information provided by EASA and determined the unsafe condition exists and is likely to exist or develop on other helicopters of these same type designs and that air safety and the public interest require adopting the AD requirements as proposed.

Related Service Information

Eurocopter has issued Alert Service Bulletin No. 25.01.02, dated September 24, 2008 (EASB), which specifies certain times measured from the date of manufacture to replace the container assemblies. EASA classified this EASB as mandatory and issued AD No. 2008-0189, dated October 10, 2008, to ensure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters.

Costs of Compliance

We estimate that this AD will affect 85 helicopters of U.S. registry. We estimate that operators may incur the following costs to comply with this AD.

- It will take minimal time to determine the manufacturing date of the container and about 1/2 work-hour per helicopter to replace the container assemblies at an average labor rate of \$85 per work hour.
- Required parts will cost about \$21,775 for the left container assembly and \$26,690 for the right container assembly per helicopter.

Based on these figures, we estimate the AD's total cost impact on U.S. operators to be \$485,075, assuming 10 helicopters require replacement of the right and left container assemblies.

Authority for This Rulemaking

Title 49 of the United States Code specifies the FAA's authority to issue rules on aviation safety. Subtitle I, section 106, describes the authority of the FAA Administrator. Subtitle VII: Aviation Programs, describes in more detail the scope of the Agency's authority.

We are issuing this rulemaking under the authority described in Subtitle VII, Part A, Subpart III, Section 44701: "General requirements." Under that section, Congress charges the FAA with promoting safe flight of civil aircraft in air commerce by prescribing regulations for practices, methods, and procedures the Administrator finds necessary for safety in air commerce. This regulation is within the scope of that authority because it addresses an unsafe condition that is likely to exist or develop on helicopters identified in this rulemaking action.

Regulatory Findings

This AD will not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132. This AD will not have a substantial direct effect 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.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify that this AD:

- (1) Is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866;
- (2) Is not a "significant rule" under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979);
- (3) Will not affect intrastate aviation in Alaska to the extent that it justifies making a regulatory distinction; and
- (4) 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.

We prepared an economic evaluation of the estimated costs to comply with this AD and placed it in the AD docket.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

Adoption of the Amendment

Accordingly, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the FAA amends 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. The FAA amends § 39.13 by adding the following new airworthiness directive (AD):



2012-26-07 Eurocopter France Helicopters: Amendment 39-17302; Docket No. FAA-2012-0774; Directorate Identifier 2010-SW-057-AD.

(a) Applicability

This AD applies to Model AS350BA helicopters with AERAZUR left-hand emergency flotation gear container assembly (container assembly), part number (P/N) 158170 or 158210-1, or right-hand container assembly, P/N 158171 or 158215-1, installed, certificated in any category.

(b) Unsafe Condition

This AD defines the unsafe condition as failure of the container assembly because of age. This condition could result in damage to the helicopter and injury to the occupants after an emergency water landing.

(c) Effective Date

This AD becomes effective February 11, 2013.

(d) Compliance

You are responsible for performing each action required by this AD within the specified compliance time unless it has already been accomplished prior to that time.

(e) Required Actions

(1) Determine the manufacturing date of each part-numbered container assembly stamped on the cover of the identification plate.

(2) Replace each container assembly with an airworthy container assembly as follows:

(i) For a container assembly with a date of manufacture 12 or more years before the effective date of this AD, replace within 30 days.

(ii) For a container assembly with a date of manufacture 10 or more years and less than 12 years before the effective date of this AD, replace within 60 days.

(iii) For a container assembly with a date of manufacture 9 or more years and less than 10 years before the effective date of this AD, replace before reaching 10 years and 60 days.

(iv) For a container assembly with a date of manufacture less than 9 years before the effective date of this AD, replace before reaching 10 years.

(f) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, Aviation Safety Group, FAA, may approve AMOCs for this AD. Send your proposal to: Gary Roach, Aviation Safety Engineer, Regulations and Policy Group, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Fort Worth, Texas 76137; telephone (817) 222-5110; email gary.b.roach@faa.gov.

(2) For operations conducted under a 14 CFR part 119 operating certificate or under 14 CFR part 91, subpart K, we suggest that you notify your principal inspector, or lacking a principal inspector, the manager of the local flight standards district office or certificate holding district office, before operating any aircraft complying with this AD through an AMOC.

(g) Additional Information

(1) Eurocopter Alert Service Bulletin No. 25.01.02, dated September 24, 2008, which is not incorporated by reference, contains additional information about the subject of this AD. For service information identified in this AD, contact American Eurocopter Corporation, 2701 Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, TX 75053-4005, telephone (800) 232-0323, fax (972) 641-3710, or at <http://www.eurocopter.com>. You may review a copy of the service information at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

(2) The subject of this AD is addressed in European Aviation Safety (EASA) AD No. 2008-0189, dated October 10, 2008.

(h) Subject

Joint Aircraft Service Component (JASC) Code: 3212 Emergency Flotation Section.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on December 20, 2012.

Kim Smith,
Directorate Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate,
Aircraft Certification Service.