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## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

### **Federal Aviation Administration**

#### **14 CFR Part 39**

**[Docket No. FAA-2015-3970; Directorate Identifier 2015-SW-006-AD; Amendment 39-18497; AD 2016-08-20]**

**RIN 2120-AA64**

**Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters (Previously Eurocopter France)**

**AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Final rule.

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**SUMMARY:** We are superseding airworthiness directive (AD) 2014-12-51 for Airbus Helicopters (previously Eurocopter France) Model EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters. AD 2014-12-51 required repetitively inspecting the tailboom to Fenestron junction frame (junction frame) for a crack. This new AD retains the requirements of AD 2014-12-51, changes the applicability from helicopters with certain hours time-in-service (TIS) to junction frames with certain hours TIS, and adds a compliance time for sling cycles to the junction frame inspection interval. The actions of this AD are intended to detect a crack and to prevent failure of the junction frame, which could result in loss of the Fenestron and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

**DATES:** This AD is effective June 6, 2016.

The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of a certain document listed in this AD as of June 6, 2016.

**ADDRESSES:** For service information identified in this final rule, contact Airbus Helicopters, Inc., 2701 N. Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, TX 75052; telephone (972) 641-0000 or (800) 232-0323; fax (972) 641-3775; or at <http://www.airbushelicopters.com/techpub>. You may review the referenced service information at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy, Room 6N-321, Fort Worth, TX 76177. It is also on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2015-3970.

#### **Examining the AD Docket**

You may examine the AD docket on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2015-3970; 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,

the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) 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:** Robert Grant, Aviation Safety Engineer, Safety Management Group, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy, Fort Worth, TX 76177; email robert.grant@faa.gov.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### **Discussion**

On September 25, 2015, at 80 FR 57742, the Federal Register published our notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to amend 14 CFR part 39 to remove AD 2014-12-51, Amendment 39-17921 (79 FR 45335, August 5, 2014), and add a new AD. AD 2014-12-51 applied to Airbus Helicopters Model EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters with 690 or more hours TIS and required, within 10 hours TIS, dye-penetrant inspecting certain areas of the junction frame for a crack. AD 2014-12-51 also required, at intervals not exceeding 25 hours TIS, either repeating the dye-penetrant inspection or performing a borescope inspection of certain areas of the junction frame for a crack. If there was a crack, AD 2014-12-51 required replacing the junction frame. AD 2014-12-51 was prompted by two incidents of crack propagation through the junction frame that initiated in the lower right-hand side between the web and the flange where the lower spar of the tailboom is joined. The cracks were significant in length and not visible from the outside of the helicopter.

The NPRM was prompted by AD No. 2015-0033-E dated February 24, 2015 (AD 2015-0033-E), issued by EASA, which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union, to correct an unsafe condition on Airbus Helicopters EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters. The NPRM proposed to require retaining the dye penetrant and borescope inspections in AD 2014-12-51 but with revised compliance times. The NRPM also proposed to change the applicability to helicopters with 690 hours TIS accumulated on the junction frame instead of on the helicopter, and proposed including an inspection interval defined in sling cycles. These actions were intended to detect a crack and to prevent failure of the junction frame, which could result in loss of the Fenestron and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

### **Comments**

After our NPRM (80 FR 57742, September 25, 2015) was published, we received a comment from one commenter.

### **Request**

One commenter requested the addition of a 10-hour or 250-sling cycle visual pilot check for helicopters with Modification 350A087421 or that have complied with Airbus Helicopters Service Bulletin No. EC130-53-029, Revision 0, dated February 20, 2015 (SB EC130-53-029). The commenter stated this pilot check would benefit operators and provide the same level of safety.

We disagree. While the EASA AD allows the check requested by the commenter as an alternative method, because the cause of the fatigue cracking is still under investigation, we cannot determine that this method would correct the unsafe condition.

## **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, reviewed the relevant information, considered the comment received, and determined the unsafe condition exists and is likely to exist or develop on other helicopters of the same type designs and that air safety and the public interest require adopting the AD requirements as proposed.

## **Interim Action**

We consider this AD to be an interim action. If final action is later identified, we might consider further rulemaking then.

## **Differences Between This AD and the EASA AD**

The EASA AD includes alternate compliance instructions for helicopters modified with a cut-out in production by Airbus Helicopters Modification 350A087421 or in service by compliance with SB EC130-53-029. This AD does not.

## **Related Service Information Under 1 CFR Part 51**

We reviewed Airbus Helicopters Emergency Alert Service Bulletin No. 05A017, Revision 2, dated February 20, 2015 (EASB 05A017), for Model EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters. EASB 05A017 describes alternate procedures for inspecting outside the tailboom for a crack at reduced inspection intervals in combination with the internal inspections at extended intervals. EASB 05A017 also specifies adding sling cycles to the existing flight hour inspection interval for helicopters that perform external load-carrying operations. EASA issued AD No. 2015-0033-E mandating the requirements in EASB 05A017 to ensure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters.

This service information is reasonably available because the interested parties have access to it through their normal course of business or by the means identified in the ADDRESSES section.

## **Other Related Service Information**

Airbus Helicopters also issued SB EC130-53-029, which contains procedures to cut out the skin and splice at the junction frame to facilitate the external inspection specified in EASB 05A017.

## **Costs of Compliance**

We estimate that this AD affects 208 helicopters of U.S. Registry. We estimate that operators may incur the following costs in order to comply with this AD. At an average labor rate of \$85 per work-hour, dye-penetrant inspecting the junction frame will require 1 work-hour, for a cost of \$85 per helicopter and a total cost of \$17,680 for the U.S. fleet, per inspection cycle. Borescope inspecting the junction frame will require 0.5 work-hour, for a cost of \$43 per helicopter and a total cost of \$8,944 for the U.S. fleet, per inspection cycle.

## **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 removing Airworthiness Directive (AD) 2014-12-51, Amendment 39-17921 (79 FR 45335, August 5, 2014), and adding the following new AD:



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**2016-08-20 Airbus Helicopters (Previously Eurocopter France):** Amendment 39-18497; Docket No. FAA-2015-3970; Directorate Identifier 2015-SW-006-AD.

**(a) Applicability**

This AD applies to Airbus Helicopters Model EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters with a tailboom to fenestron junction frame (junction frame) that has 690 or more hours time-in-service (TIS), certificated in any category.

**(b) Unsafe Condition**

This AD defines the unsafe condition as a crack in the junction frame. This condition could result in failure of the junction frame, which could result in loss of the Fenestron and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

**(c) Affected ADs**

This AD supersedes AD 2014-12-51, Amendment 39-17921 (79 FR 45335, August 5, 2014).

**(d) Effective Date**

This AD becomes effective June 6, 2016.

**(e) 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.

**(f) Required Actions**

(1) Before the junction frame reaches 700 hours TIS or within 10 hours TIS, whichever occurs later, remove the horizontal stabilizer, clean the junction frame, and dye-penetrant inspect around the circumference of the junction frame for a crack in the areas shown in Figure 1 of Airbus Helicopters EC130 Emergency Alert Service Bulletin No. 05A017, Revision 2, dated February 20, 2015 (EASB 05A017). Pay particular attention to the area around the 4 spars (item b) of Figure 1 of EASB 05A017. An example of a crack is shown in Figure 3 of EASB 05A017.

(2) Within 25 hours TIS or 390 sling cycles, whichever occurs first after the inspection required by paragraph (f)(1) of this AD, and thereafter at intervals not exceeding 25 hours TIS or 390 sling cycles, whichever occurs first, either perform the actions of paragraph (f)(1) of this AD or, if the area is clean, using a borescope, inspect around the circumference of the junction frame for a crack in the areas shown in Figure 2 of EASB 05A017. Pay particular attention to the area around the 4 spars (item b) of Figure 2 of EASB 05A017. An example of a crack is shown in Figure 3 of EASB 05A017. For purposes of this AD, a sling cycle is defined as one landing with or without stopping the rotor or one external load-carrying operation; an external load-carrying operation occurs each time a helicopter picks up an external load and drops it off.

(3) If there is a crack, before further flight, replace the junction frame.

**(g) Special Flight Permits**

Special flight permits are prohibited.

**(h) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)**

(1) The Manager, Safety Management Group, FAA, may approve AMOCs for this AD. Send your proposal to: Robert Grant, Aviation Safety Engineer, Safety Management Group, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy., Fort Worth, TX 76177; telephone (817) 222-5110; email 9-ASW-FTW-AMOC-Requests@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.

**(i) Additional Information**

(1) Airbus Helicopters Service Bulletin No. EC130-53-029, Revision 0, dated February 20, 2015, which is not incorporated by reference, contains additional information about the subject of this final rule. For service information identified in this final rule, contact Airbus Helicopters, Inc., 2701 N. Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, TX 75052; telephone (972) 641-0000 or (800) 232-0323; fax (972) 641-3775; or at <http://www.airbushelicopters.com/techpub>. You may review a copy of the service information at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy., Room 6N-321, Fort Worth, TX 76177.

(2) The subject of this AD is addressed in European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD No. 2015-0033-E, dated February 24, 2015. You may view the EASA AD on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> in Docket No. FAA-2015-3970.

**(j) Subject**

Joint Aircraft Service Component (JASC) Code: 5302: Rotorcraft Tailboom.

**(k) Material Incorporated by Reference**

(1) The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of the service information listed in this paragraph under 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51.

(2) You must use this service information as applicable to do the actions required by this AD, unless the AD specifies otherwise.

(i) Airbus Helicopters Emergency Alert Service Bulletin No. 05A017, Revision 2, dated February 20, 2015.

(ii) Reserved.

(3) For Airbus Helicopters service information identified in this final rule, contact Airbus Helicopters, Inc., 2701 N. Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, TX 75052; telephone (972) 641-0000 or (800) 232-0323; fax (972) 641-3775; or at <http://www.airbushelicopters.com/techpub>.

(4) You may view this service information at FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy., Room 6N-321, Fort Worth, TX 76177. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call (817) 222-5110.

(5) You may view this service information that is incorporated by reference at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For information on the availability of this material at NARA, call (202) 741-6030, or go to: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/cfr/ibr-locations.html>.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on April 15, 2016.  
Scott A. Horn,  
Acting Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate,  
Aircraft Certification Service.