

[4910-13]

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 23

[Docket No. CE312; Special Conditions No. 23-252-SC]

Special Conditions: Cessna Aircraft Company, Model LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG; AmSafe Inflatable Three-Point Restraint Safety Belt with an Integrated Airbag Device

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final special conditions; request for comments.

SUMMARY: These special conditions are issued for the installation of an inflatable three-point restraint safety belt with an integrated airbag device at the pilot, co-pilot and passenger seats on the Cessna Aircraft Company airplane models LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG. These airplanes, as modified by the installation of these inflatable safety belts, will have novel and unusual design features associated with the upper-torso restraint portions of the three-point safety belts, which contain an integrated airbag device. The applicable airworthiness regulations do not contain adequate or appropriate safety standards for this design feature. These special conditions contain the additional safety standards that the Administrator considers necessary to establish a level of safety equivalent to that established by the existing airworthiness standards.

DATES: The effective date of these special conditions is July 21, 2011.

We must receive your comments on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER.]

ADDRESSES: Mail two copies of your comments to: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Regional Counsel, ACE-7, Attention: Rules Docket, Docket No. CE312, 901 Locust, Room 506, Kansas City, Missouri 64106. You may deliver two copies to the Regional Counsel at the above address. Mark your comments : Docket No. CE312. You may inspect comments in the Rules Docket weekdays, except Federal holidays, between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Bob Stegeman, Federal Aviation Administration, Aircraft Certification Service, Small Airplane Directorate, ACE-111, 901 Locust, Kansas City, Missouri, 816-329-4140, fax 816-329-4090, e-mail Robert.Stegeman@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The FAA has determined that notice and opportunity for prior public comment hereon are impracticable because these procedures would significantly delay issuance of the approval design and thus delivery of the affected aircraft. In addition, the substance of these special conditions has been subject to the public comment process in several prior instances with no substantive comments received. The FAA, therefore, finds that good cause exists for making these special conditions effective upon issuance.

COMMENTS INVITED

We invite interested persons are invited to submit such written data, views, or arguments, as they desire. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the special conditions, explain the reason for any recommended change, and include supporting data. We ask that you send us two copies of written comments.

We will file in the docket all comments we receive, as well as a report summarizing each substantive public contact with FAA personnel about these special conditions. You may inspect the docket before and after the comment closing date. If you wish to review the docket in person, go to the address in the ADDRESSES section of this preamble between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

We will consider all comments we receive by the closing date for comments. We will consider comments filed late if it is possible to do so without incurring expense or delay. We may change these special conditions based on the comments we receive.

If you want us to let you know we received your comments on these special conditions, send us a pre-addressed stamped postcard on which the docket number appears. We will stamp the date on the postcard and mail it back to you.

Background

On February 3, 2011, AmSafe, Inc. applied for a Supplemental Type Certificate (STC), for the installation of a three-point safety belt restraint system for the pilot, co-pilot and the passenger seats, each incorporating inflatable airbags, for model LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG airplanes.

The inflatable restraint systems are: three-point safety belt restraint systems consisting of a lap belt and shoulder harness with an inflatable airbag attached to the lap belt. The inflatable portion of the restraint system will rely on sensors to electronically activate the inflator for deployment.

If an emergency landing occurs, the airbags will inflate and provide a protective cushion between the occupant's head and the structure within the airplane. This will reduce the potential

for head and torso injury. The inflatable restraint behaves in a manner similar to an automotive airbag; however, in this case, the airbag is integrated into the lap belt. While airbags and inflatable restraints are standard in the automotive industry, the use of an inflatable restraint system is novel for general aviation operations.

The FAA has determined that this project will be accomplished on the basis of providing the same current level of safety as the conventional certification basis airplane occupant restraint systems. The FAA has two primary safety concerns with the installation of airbags or inflatable restraints:

- That they perform properly under foreseeable operating conditions; and
- That they do not perform in a manner or at such times as to impede the pilot's ability to maintain control of the airplane or constitute a hazard to the airplane or occupants.

The latter point has the potential to be the more rigorous of the requirements. An unexpected deployment while conducting the takeoff or landing phases of flight may result in an unsafe condition. The unexpected deployment may either startle the pilot or generate a force sufficient to cause a sudden movement of the control yoke. Either action could result in a loss of control of the airplane, the consequences of which are magnified due to the low operating altitudes during these phases of flight. The FAA has considered this when establishing these special conditions.

The inflatable restraint system relies on sensors to electronically activate the inflator for deployment. These sensors could be susceptible to inadvertent activation, causing deployment in a potentially unsafe manner. The consequences of an inadvertent deployment must be considered in establishing the reliability of the system. AmSafe, Inc. must show that the effects

of an inadvertent deployment in flight are not a hazard to the airplane or that an inadvertent deployment is extremely improbable. In addition, general aviation aircraft are susceptible to a large amount of cumulative wear and tear on a restraint system. The potential for inadvertent deployment may increase as a result of this cumulative damage. Therefore, the impact of wear and tear on inadvertent deployment must be considered. The effect of this cumulative damage means a life limit must be established for the appropriate system components in the restraint system design.

There are additional factors to be considered to minimize the chances of inadvertent deployment. General aviation airplanes are exposed to a unique operating environment, since the same airplane may be used by both experienced and student pilots. The effect of this environment on inadvertent deployment must be understood. Therefore, qualification testing of the firing hardware/software must consider the following:

- The airplane vibration levels appropriate for a general aviation airplane; and
- The inertial loads that result from typical flight or ground maneuvers, including gusts and hard landings.

Any tendency for the firing mechanism to activate as a result of these loads or acceleration levels is unacceptable.

Other influences on inadvertent deployment include high intensity electromagnetic fields (HIRF) and lightning. Since the sensors that trigger deployment are electronic, they must be protected from the effects of these threats. To comply with HIRF and lightning requirements, the AmSafe, Inc. inflatable restraint system is considered a critical system, since its inadvertent deployment could have a hazardous effect on the airplane.

Given the level of safety of the occupant restraints currently installed, the inflatable restraint system must show that it will offer an equivalent level of protection for an emergency landing. If an inadvertent deployment occurs, the restraint must still be at least as strong as a Technical Standard Order approved belt and shoulder harnesses. There is no requirement for the inflatable portion of the restraint to offer protection during multiple impacts, where more than one impact would require protection.

The inflatable restraint system must deploy and provide protection for each occupant under an emergency landing condition. The seats of LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG model airplanes are certificated to the structural requirements of § 23.562; therefore, the test emergency landing pulses identified in § 23.562 must be used to satisfy this requirement.

A wide range of occupants may use the inflatable restraint; therefore, the protection offered by this restraint should be effective for occupants that range from the fifth percentile female to the ninety-fifth percentile male. Energy absorption must be performed in a consistent manner for this occupant range.

In support of this operational capability, there must be a means to verify the integrity of this system before each flight. AmSafe, Inc. must establish inspection intervals where they have demonstrated the system to be reliable between these intervals.

An inflatable restraint may be “armed” even though no occupant is using the seat. While there will be means to verify the integrity of the system before flight, it is also prudent to require unoccupied seats with active restraints not constitute a hazard to any occupant. This will protect any individual performing maintenance inside the cockpit while the aircraft is on the ground.

The restraint must also provide suitable visual warnings that would alert rescue personnel to the presence of an inflatable restraint system.

In addition, the design must prevent the inflatable seatbelt from being incorrectly buckled and/or installed such that the airbag would not properly deploy. AmSafe, Inc. must show that such deployment is not hazardous to the occupant and will still provide the required protection.

The cabins of the Cessna model airplanes identified in these special conditions are confined areas, and the FAA is concerned that noxious gasses may accumulate if the airbag deploys. When deployment occurs, either by design or inadvertently, there must not be a release of hazardous quantities of gas or particulate matter into the cockpit.

An inflatable restraint must not increase the risk already associated with fire. Therefore, the inflatable restraint must be protected from the effects of fire to avoid creating an additional hazard by, for example, a rupture of the inflator.

Finally, the airbag is likely to have a large volume displacement, and possibly impede the egress of an occupant. Since the bag deflates to absorb energy, it is likely that the inflatable restraint would be deflated at the time an occupant would attempt egress. However, it is appropriate to specify a time interval after which the inflatable restraint may not impede rapid egress. Ten seconds has been chosen as reasonable time. This time limit will offer a level of protection throughout the impact event.

Type Certification Basis

Under the provisions of § 21.101, AmSafe, Inc. must show that the LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG model airplanes continue to meet the applicable provisions of the applicable regulations in effect on the date of application for the type certificate. The regulations

incorporated by reference in the type certificate are commonly referred to as the "original type certification basis." The following model is covered by this special condition:

Cessna Aircraft Company models LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG:

For the models listed above, the certification basis also includes all exemptions, if any; equivalent level of safety findings, if any; and special conditions not relevant to the special conditions adopted by this rulemaking action.

If the Administrator determines that the applicable airworthiness regulations (i.e., part 23 as amended) do not contain adequate or appropriate safety standards for the AmSafe, Inc., inflatable restraint as installed on these Cessna Aircraft Company models because of a novel or unusual design feature, special conditions are prescribed under the provisions of § 21.16.

Special conditions, as appropriate, as defined in § 11.19, are issued in accordance with § 11.38, and become part of the type certification basis in accordance with § 21.101.

Special conditions are initially applicable to the models for which they are issued. Should the applicant apply for a supplemental type certificate to modify any other model included on the same type certificate to incorporate the same novel or unusual design feature, the special conditions would also apply to that model under the provisions of § 21.101.

Novel or Unusual Design Features

The Cessna Aircraft Company LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG model airplanes will incorporate the following novel or unusual design feature: A three-point safety belt restraint system incorporating an inflatable airbag for the pilot, co-pilot, and passenger seats.

The purpose of the airbag is to reduce the potential for injury in the event of an accident. In a severe impact, an airbag will deploy from the lap belt. The airbag will deploy between the

head of the occupant and airplane interior structure, which will provide some protection to the head of the occupant. The restraint will rely on sensors to electronically activate the inflator for deployment.

The Code of Federal Regulations states performance criteria for seats and restraints in an objective manner. However, none of these criteria are adequate to address the specific issues raised concerning inflatable restraints. Therefore, the FAA has determined that, in addition to the requirements of part 21 and part 23, special conditions are needed to address the installation of this inflatable restraint.

Accordingly, these special conditions are adopted for the Cessna Aircraft Company LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG model airplanes equipped with three-point inflatable restraints. Other conditions may be developed, as needed, based on further FAA review and discussions with the manufacturer and civil aviation authorities.

Applicability

As discussed above, these special conditions are applicable to the Cessna Aircraft Company, LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG model airplanes equipped with the three or four-point inflatable restraint systems.

Conclusion

This action affects only certain novel or unusual design features on the previously identified Cessna Aircraft Company model airplanes. It is not a rule of general applicability, and it affects only the applicant who applied to the FAA for approval of these features on the airplane.

Under standard practice, the effective date of final special conditions would be 30 days after the date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER; however, the substance of these special conditions has been subjected to the notice and comment period in several prior instances and has been derived without substantive change from those previously issued. It is unlikely that prior public comment would result in a significant change from the substance contained herein. For this reason, and because a delay would significantly affect the delivery of the airplane(s), the FAA has determined that prior public notice and comment are unnecessary and impracticable, and good cause exists for adopting these special conditions upon issuance. The FAA is requesting comments to allow interested persons to submit views that may not have been submitted in response to the prior opportunities for comment described above.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 23

Aircraft, Aviation safety, Signs and symbols.

Citation

The authority citation for these special conditions is as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113 and 44701; 14 CFR 21.16 and 21.101; and 14 CFR 11.38 and 11.19.

The Special Conditions

The FAA has determined that this project will be accomplished on the basis of not lowering the current level of safety of the Cessna Aircraft Company LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG model occupant restraint systems. Accordingly, pursuant to the

authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the following special conditions are issued as part of the type certification basis for this model.

Inflatable Three-point Restraint Safety Belt with an Integrated Airbag Device on the Pilot, Co-pilot, and Passenger Seats of the Cessna Aircraft Company LC40-550FG, LC41-550FG, and LC42-550FG model airplanes.

1. It must be shown that the inflatable restraint will deploy and provide protection under emergency landing conditions. Compliance will be demonstrated using the dynamic test condition specified in 14 CFR, part 23, § 23.562(b)(2). It is not necessary to account for floor warpage, as required by § 23.562(b)(3), or vertical dynamic loads, as required by § 23.562(b)(1). The means of protection must take into consideration a range of stature from a 5th percentile female to a 95th percentile male. The inflatable restraint must provide a consistent approach to energy absorption throughout that range.
2. Unoccupied seats that have an active restraint must not constitute a hazard to any occupant.
3. The design must prevent the inflatable restraint from being incorrectly buckled and/or incorrectly installed such that the airbag would not properly deploy. Alternatively, it must be shown that such deployment is not hazardous to the occupant and will provide the required protection.
4. It must be shown that the inflatable restraint system is not susceptible to inadvertent deployment as a result of wear and tear or the inertial loads resulting from in-flight or ground maneuvers (including gusts and hard landings) that are likely to be experienced in service.
5. It must be extremely improbable for an inadvertent deployment of the restraint system to occur, or an inadvertent deployment must not impede the pilot's ability to maintain control of the

airplane or cause an unsafe condition (or hazard to the airplane). In addition, a deployed inflatable restraint must be at least as strong as a Technical Standard Order (C114) certificated belt and shoulder harness.

6. It must be shown that deployment of the inflatable restraint system is not hazardous to the occupant or will not result in injuries that could impede rapid egress. This assessment must include occupants whose restraint is loosely fastened.

7. It must be shown that an inadvertent deployment that could cause injury to a standing or sitting person is improbable. In addition, the restraint must also provide suitable visual warnings that would alert rescue personnel to the presence of an inflatable restraint system.

8. It must be shown that the inflatable restraint will not impede rapid egress of the occupants 10 seconds after its deployment.

9. To comply with HIRF and lightning requirements, the inflatable restraint system is considered a critical system since its deployment could have a hazardous effect on the airplane.

10. It must be shown that the inflatable restraints will not release hazardous quantities of gas or particulate matter into the cabin.

11. The inflatable restraint system installation must be protected from the effects of fire such that no hazard to occupants will result.

12. There must be a means to verify the integrity of the inflatable restraint activation system before each flight or it must be demonstrated to reliably operate between inspection intervals.

13. A life limit must be established for appropriate system components.

14. Qualification testing of the internal firing mechanism must be performed at vibration levels appropriate for a general aviation airplane.

Issued in Kansas City, Missouri on July 21, 2011.

s/

Earl Lawrence
Manager, Small Airplane Directorate
Aircraft Certification Service