

[Federal Register Volume 86, Number 43 (Monday, March 8, 2021)]

[Rules and Regulations]

[Pages 13165-13168]

From the Federal Register Online via the Government Publishing Office [www.gpo.gov]

[FR Doc No: 2021-04800]

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2021-0094; Project Identifier MCAI-2021-00100-R; Amendment 39-21437; AD 2021-04-15]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The FAA is adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for all Airbus Helicopters Model AS355E, AS355F, AS355F1, AS355F2, AS355N and AS355NP helicopters; and certain Model AS350B3 helicopters. This AD was prompted by a report that, during an unscheduled post-flight inspection of the tail cone area, a crack was found in the spar of the upper part of the vertical fin and fractures were found in the two front attachment screws. This AD requires repetitive visual inspections of the right-hand side of the vertical fin spar for discrepancies (cracking), and corrective action if necessary, as specified in a European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD, which is incorporated by reference. The FAA is issuing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products.

DATES: This AD becomes effective March 23, 2021.

The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of a certain publication listed in this AD as of March 23, 2021.

The FAA must receive comments on this AD by April 22, 2021.

ADDRESSES: You may send comments, using the procedures found in 14 CFR 11.43 and 11.45, by any of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- Fax: 202-493-2251.
- Mail: U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590.
- Hand Delivery: Deliver to Mail address above between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

For material incorporated by reference (IBR) in this AD, contact the EASA, Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer 3, 50668 Cologne, Germany; telephone +49 221 8999 000; email ADs@easa.europa.eu; internet www.easa.europa.eu. You may find this material on the EASA website at <https://ad.easa.europa.eu>. You may view this material at the 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. It is also available in the AD docket on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0094.

Examining the AD Docket

You may examine the AD docket on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0094; or in person at Docket Operations between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The AD docket contains this AD, any comments received, and other information. The street address for Docket Operations is listed above. Comments will be available in the AD docket shortly after receipt.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kathleen Arrigotti, Aviation Safety Engineer, Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3218; email: kathleen.arrigotti@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Discussion

The EASA, which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union, has issued EASA AD 2020-0186, dated August 20, 2020 (EASA AD 2020-0186) (also referred to as the Mandatory Continuing Airworthiness Information, or the MCAI), to correct an unsafe condition for all Airbus Helicopters Model AS355E, AS355F, AS355F1, AS355F2, AS355N and AS355NP helicopters; and certain Model AS350B3 helicopters.

This AD was prompted by a report that, during an unscheduled post-flight inspection of the tail cone area of an Airbus Helicopters Model AS355NP helicopter, a crack was found in the spar of the upper part of the vertical fin and fractures were found in the two front attachment screws. Airbus Helicopters Model AS350B3 helicopters have a similar vertical fin configuration and are subject to comparable load levels as the affected Model AS355NP helicopter, therefore, this model may be subject to the same unsafe condition revealed on the Model AS355NP helicopter. The FAA is issuing this AD to address cracking in the spar of the upper part of the vertical fin and fractures in the front attachment screws. This condition could lead to in-flight separation of the upper part of the vertical fin, resulting in loss of control of the helicopter. See the MCAI for additional background information.

Related IBR Material Under 1 CFR Part 51

EASA AD 2020-0186 describes procedures for, among other actions, repetitive visual inspections of the right-hand side of the vertical fin spar for cracking and corrective action. The corrective action includes repair. EASA AD 2020-0186 also describes procedures for an optional modification, which terminates the repetitive inspections.

This material 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.

FAA's Determination

These products have been approved by the aviation authority of another country, and are approved for operation in the United States. Pursuant to the FAA's bilateral agreement with the State of Design Authority, the FAA has been notified of the unsafe condition described in the MCAI referenced above. The FAA is issuing this AD after evaluating all pertinent information and determining that the unsafe condition exists and is likely to exist or develop on other products of these same type designs.

Requirements of This AD

This AD requires accomplishing the actions specified in EASA AD 2020-0186, described previously, as incorporated by reference, except for any differences identified as exceptions in the regulatory text of this AD and except as discussed under “Differences Between this AD and the MCAI.”

Explanation of Required Compliance Information

In the FAA's ongoing efforts to improve the efficiency of the AD process, the FAA initially worked with Airbus and EASA to develop a process to use certain EASA ADs as the primary source of information for compliance with requirements for corresponding FAA ADs. The FAA has since coordinated with other manufacturers and civil aviation authorities (CAAs) to use this process. As a result, EASA AD 2020-0186 will be incorporated by reference in the FAA final rule. This AD would, therefore, require compliance with EASA AD 2020-0186 in its entirety, through that incorporation, except for any differences identified as exceptions in the regulatory text of this AD. Using common terms that are the same as the heading of a particular section in the EASA AD does not mean that operators need comply only with that section. For example, where the AD requirement refers to “all required actions and compliance times,” compliance with this AD requirement is not limited to the section titled “Required Action(s) and Compliance Time(s)” in the EASA AD. Service information specified in EASA AD 2020-0186 that is required for compliance with EASA AD 2020-0186 is available on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0094.

Differences Between This AD and the MCAI

Paragraph (2) of EASA AD 2020-0186 specifies doing repetitive cleaning and detailed inspections of the vertical fin spar and vertical fin upper attachments. The actions specified in paragraph (2) of EASA AD 2020-0186 are not required by this AD because the planned compliance time for those actions would allow enough time to provide notice and opportunity for prior public comment on the merits of those actions. The FAA is considering additional rulemaking to address the actions specified in paragraph (2) of EASA AD 2020-0186.

FAA's Justification and Determination of the Effective Date

Section 553(b)(3)(B) of the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C.) authorizes agencies to dispense with notice and comment procedures for rules when the agency, for “good cause” finds that those procedures are “impracticable, unnecessary, or contrary to the public interest.” Under this section, an agency, upon finding good cause, may issue a final rule without seeking comment prior to the rulemaking.

An unsafe condition exists that requires the immediate adoption of this AD without providing an opportunity for public comments prior to adoption. The FAA has found that the risk to the flying public justifies waiving notice and comment prior to adoption of this rule because cracking in the

spar of the upper part of the vertical fin and fractures in the front attachment screws could lead to in-flight separation of the upper part of the vertical fin, resulting in loss of control of the helicopter. In addition, the initial inspection is required within 55 hours time-in-service, a time period of less than 3 months based on the average flight-hour utilization rate of these helicopters. Therefore, notice and opportunity for prior public comment are impracticable and contrary to public interest pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(3)(B). In addition, the FAA finds that good cause exists pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d) for making this amendment effective in less than 30 days.

Comments Invited

The FAA invites you to send any written relevant data, views, or arguments about this AD. Send your comments to an address listed under ADDRESSES. Include “Docket No. FAA-2021-0094; Project Identifier MCAI-2021-00100-R” at the beginning of your comments. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the AD, explain the reason for any recommended change, and include supporting data. The FAA will consider all comments received by the closing date and may amend this AD because of those comments.

Except for Confidential Business Information (CBI) as described in the following paragraph, and other information as described in 14 CFR 11.35, the FAA will post all comments received, without change, to <https://www.regulations.gov>, including any personal information you provide. The agency will also post a report summarizing each substantive verbal contact received about this AD.

Confidential Business Information

CBI is commercial or financial information that is both customarily and actually treated as private by its owner. Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552), CBI is exempt from public disclosure. If your comments responsive to this AD contain commercial or financial information that is customarily treated as private, that you actually treat as private, and that is relevant or responsive to this AD, it is important that you clearly designate the submitted comments as CBI. Please mark each page of your submission containing CBI as “PROPIN.” The FAA will treat such marked submissions as confidential under the FOIA, and they will not be placed in the public docket of this AD. Submissions containing CBI should be sent to Kathleen Arrigotti, Aviation Safety Engineer, Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3218; email: kathleen.arrigotti@faa.gov. Any commentary that the FAA receives that is not specifically designated as CBI will be placed in the public docket for this rulemaking.

Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA)

The requirements of the RFA do not apply when an agency finds good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 to adopt a rule without prior notice and comment. Because the FAA has determined that it has good cause to adopt this rule without notice and comment, RFA analysis is not required.

Costs of Compliance

The FAA estimates that this AD affects 650 helicopters of U.S. registry. The FAA estimates the following costs to comply with this AD:

Estimated Costs for Required Actions

Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product	Cost on U.S. operators
7 work-hour × \$85 per hour = \$595	\$0	\$595	\$386,750

Estimated Costs for Optional Actions

Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product
8 work-hours × \$85 per hour = \$680	\$7,300	\$7,980

The FAA estimates the following costs to do any necessary on-condition action that would be required based on the results of any required or optional actions. The FAA has no way of determining the number of helicopters that might need this on-condition action:

On-Condition Costs

Action	Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product
Replacement	4 work-hours × \$85 per hour = \$340	\$17,052	\$17,392

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.

The FAA is 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 products identified in this rulemaking action.

Regulatory Findings

The FAA determined that this AD would not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132. This AD would 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 this regulation:

- (1) Is not a “significant regulatory action” under Executive Order 12866, and
- (2) Will not affect intrastate aviation in Alaska.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

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

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:



2021-04-15 Airbus Helicopters: Amendment 39-21437; Docket No. FAA-2021-0094; Project Identifier MCAI-2021-00100-R.

(a) Effective Date

This airworthiness directive (AD) becomes effective March 23, 2021.

(b) Affected ADs

None.

(c) Applicability

This AD applies to Airbus Helicopters specified in paragraph (c)(1) and (2) of this AD, certificated in any category.

(1) Model AS355E, AS355F, AS355F1, AS355F2, AS355N, and AS355NP helicopters, all serial numbers.

(2) Model AS350B3 helicopters, all serial numbers except those that have embodied Modification 07.3148 in production, or Eurocopter AS350 Service Bulletin 55.00.14 (any revision) in service.

(d) Subject

Joint Aircraft System Component (JASC) Code 5531, Vertical Stabilizer, Spar/Rib.

(e) Reason

This AD was prompted by a report that, during an unscheduled post-flight inspection of the tail cone area of an Airbus Helicopters Model AS355NP helicopter, a crack was found in the spar of the upper fin and fractures were found in the two front attachment screws. The FAA is issuing this AD to address cracking in the spar of the upper part of the vertical fin and fractures in the front attachment screws. This condition could lead to in-flight separation of the upper part of the vertical fin, resulting in loss of control of the helicopter.

(f) Compliance

Comply with this AD within the compliance times specified, unless already done.

(g) Requirements

Except as specified in paragraph (h) of this AD: Comply with all required actions and compliance times specified in, and in accordance with, EASA AD 2020-0186, dated August 20, 2020 (EASA AD 2020-0186).

(h) Exceptions to EASA AD 2020-0186

(1) Where EASA AD 2020-0186 refers to its effective date, this AD requires using the effective date of this AD.

(2) The “Remarks” section of EASA AD 2020-0186 does not apply to this AD.

(3) The actions specified in paragraph (2) of EASA AD 2020-0186 are not required by this AD.

(4) Where paragraph (3) of EASA AD 2020-0186 specifies to contact the manufacturer for approved repair instructions, for this AD, if any cracking is detected during any inspection, repair before further flight using a method approved by the Manager, International Validation Branch, FAA. For a repair method to be approved by the Manager, International Validation Branch, as required by this paragraph, the Manager's approval letter must specifically refer to this AD.

(5) Where EASA AD 2020-0186 refers to flight hours (FH), this AD requires using hours time-in-service.

(6) Where the service information referred to in EASA AD 2020-0186 specifies to perform a visual inspection and “if in doubt” remove the rear and the tail rotor gear box (TGB) fairings to perform a detailed inspection and “carry out” a dye-penetrant inspection, those actions are required by this AD if any crack indication (e.g., paint chips, dents, or swelling) is found during any inspection done without removing the rear and the TGB fairings.

(7) Although the service information referenced in EASA AD 2020-0186 specifies to scrap certain parts, this AD requires removing those parts from service instead.

(i) Special Flight Permit

Special flight permits, as described in 14 CFR 21.197 and 21.199, are not allowed.

(j) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, International Validation Branch, FAA, has the authority to approve AMOCs for this AD, if requested using the procedures found in 14 CFR 39.19. In accordance with 14 CFR 39.19, send your request to your principal inspector or local Flight Standards District Office, as appropriate. If sending information directly to the manager of the International Validation Branch, send it to the attention of the person identified in paragraph (k) of this AD. Information may be emailed to: 9-AVS-AIR-730-AMOC@faa.gov.

(2) Before using any approved AMOC, notify your appropriate principal inspector, or lacking a principal inspector, the manager of the local flight standards district office/certificate holding district office.

(k) Related Information

For more information about this AD, contact Kathleen Arrigotti, Aviation Safety Engineer, Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3218; email: kathleen.arrigotti@faa.gov.

(l) Material Incorporated by Reference

(1) The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference (IBR) 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 this AD specifies otherwise.

(i) European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD 2020-0186, dated August 20, 2020.

(ii) [Reserved]

(3) For EASA AD 2020-0186, contact the EASA, Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer 3, 50668 Cologne, Germany; telephone +49 221 8999 000; email ADs@easa.europa.eu; internet www.easa.europa.eu. You may find this EASA AD on the EASA website at <https://ad.easa.europa.eu>.

(4) You may view this service information at the 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. This material may be found in the AD docket on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0094.

(5) You may view this material that is incorporated by reference at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For information on the availability of this material at NARA, email fedreg.legal@nara.gov, or go to <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/cfr/ibr-locations.html>.

Issued on February 9, 2021.

Lance T. Gant,

Director, Compliance & Airworthiness Division, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 2021-04800 Filed 3-4-21; 11:15 am]