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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2021-0025; Project Identifier MCAI-2020-01248-R; Amendment 39-21422; AD 2021-04-01]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Leonardo S.p.a. Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The FAA is adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for certain Leonardo S.p.a. (Leonardo) Model AB139 and AW139 helicopters. This AD requires removing certain forward facing center seats (seats). This AD was prompted by a design deficiency that affects seats on certain main cabin floor installations. The actions of this AD are intended to address an unsafe condition on these products.

DATES: This AD becomes effective March 26, 2021.

The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of a certain document listed in this AD as of March 26, 2021.

The FAA must receive comments on this AD by April 26, 2021.

ADDRESSES: You may send comments by any of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Docket: Go to <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the online instructions for sending your comments electronically.
- Fax: 202-493-2251.
- Mail: Send comments to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590-0001.
- Hand Delivery: Deliver to the “Mail” address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

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-2021-0025; 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, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD, any service information that is incorporated by reference, 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 service information identified in this final rule, contact Leonardo S.p.A. Helicopters, Emanuele Bufano, Head of Airworthiness, Viale G.Agusta 520, 21017 C.Costa di Samarate (Va) Italy; telephone +39-0331-225074; fax +39-0331-229046; or at <https://www.leonardocompany.com/en/home>. You may view 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 available on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0025.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Miller, Aviation Safety Engineer, Certification Section, Fort Worth ACO Branch, FAA, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy., Fort Worth, TX 76177; telephone 817-222-5140; email john.m.miller@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

The FAA invites you to send any written data, views, or arguments about this final rule. Send your comments to an address listed under ADDRESSES. Include the docket number FAA-2021-0025 and Project Identifier MCAI-2020-01248-R at the beginning of your comments. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the final rule, 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 final rule 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 final rule.

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 John Miller, Aviation Safety Engineer, Certification Section, Fort Worth ACO Branch, FAA, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy., Fort Worth, TX 76177; telephone 817-222-5140; email john.m.miller@faa.gov. Any commentary that the FAA receives which is not specifically designated as CBI will be placed in the public docket for this rulemaking.

Discussion

EASA, which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union, has issued AD No. 2020-0191, dated September 4, 2020 (EASA AD 2020-0191), to correct an unsafe condition for Leonardo Model AB139 and AW139 helicopters, serial number (S/N) 31400 to 31882 inclusive, and S/N 41300 to 41570 inclusive, if a passenger cabin floor is installed, composed of 3 panels, and with the first row central seat(s) facing forward. EASA advises that a design deficiency has been identified that affects some specific main cabin floor panel installations. EASA further advises that this condition, if not corrected, could, in the case of an emergency landing, lead to failure of the affected seats, possibly resulting in injury to helicopter occupants. Accordingly, EASA AD 2020-0191 requires removing the affected seats as identified by configuration in Leonardo Alert Service Bulletin No. 139-633, Rev. A, dated September 2, 2020 (ASB 139-633). The EASA AD also provides an alternative to the seat removal for configurations which require the removal of 2 seats, which consists of modifying the helicopter to a different approved seating configuration. EASA states its AD is considered an interim action and further AD action may follow.

FAA's Determination

These helicopters have been approved by EASA and are approved for operation in the United States. Pursuant to the FAA's bilateral agreement with the European Union, EASA has notified the FAA of the unsafe condition described in its AD. The FAA is issuing this AD after evaluating all information provided by EASA and determining the unsafe condition exists and is likely to exist or develop on other helicopters of these same type designs.

Related Service Information Under 1 CFR Part 51

Leonardo has issued ASB 139-633, which specifies removing the seats of all the affected cabin configurations.

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.

AD Requirements

This AD requires removing each seat within 50 hours time-in-service (TIS).

Interim Action

The FAA considers this AD to be an interim action. The design approval holder is currently developing a modification that will address the unsafe condition identified in this AD. Once this modification is developed, approved, and available, the FAA might consider additional rulemaking.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

The requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (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 61 helicopters of U.S. Registry. Labor rates are estimated at \$85 per work-hour. Based on these numbers, the FAA estimates that operators may incur the following costs in order to comply with this AD.

Removing each affected seat takes about 1 work-hour for an estimated cost of \$85 per seat and up to \$10,370 for the U.S. fleet. There would be no parts costs.

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 removing each seat is required within 50 hours TIS, which is a short compliance time for these high usage helicopters, some of which could reach these hours within 45 calendar days. 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, for the reasons stated above, 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.

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 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, I certify that this AD:

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.

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:



FAA
Aviation Safety

AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVE

www.faa.gov/aircraft/safety/alerts/
www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/advanced.html

2021-04-01 Leonardo S.p.a.: Amendment 39-21422; Docket No. FAA-2021-0025; Project Identifier MCAI-2020-01248-R.

(a) Applicability

This Airworthiness Directive (AD) applies to Leonardo S.p.a. (Leonardo) Model AB139 and AW139 helicopters, serial number (S/N) 31400 through 31882 inclusive, and S/N 41300 through 41570 inclusive, certificated in any category, with one or two forward facing first row center seat/seats (seat) and a cabin floor composed of 3 panels, and identified by configuration in Figures 1 through 13 of Leonardo Alert Service Bulletin No. 139-633, Rev. A, dated September 2, 2020 (ASB 139-633) installed.

(b) Unsafe Condition

This AD defines the unsafe condition as a design deficiency, which if not corrected, could lead to failure of the seat during an emergency landing and subsequent injury to a helicopter occupant.

(c) Affected ADs

None.

(d) Effective Date

This AD becomes effective March 26, 2021.

(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 Action

Remove each seat within 50 hours time-in-service.

(g) Special Flight Permits

A special flight permit may be permitted provided that there is no passenger in the seat.

(h) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, Strategic Policy Rotorcraft Section, FAA, may approve AMOCs for this AD. Send your proposal to: Manager, Strategic Policy Rotorcraft Section, 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, the FAA suggests 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

The subject of this AD is addressed in European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD No. 2020-0191, dated September 4, 2020. You may view the EASA AD on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating it in Docket No. FAA-2021-0025.

(j) Subject

Joint Aircraft Service Component (JASC) Code: 2500 Cabin Equipment/Furnishings.

(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) Leonardo Alert Service Bulletin No. 139-633, Rev. A, dated September 2, 2020.

(ii) [Reserved]

(3) For service information identified in this AD, contact Leonardo S.p.A. Helicopters, Emanuele Bufano, Head of Airworthiness, Viale G.Agusta 520, 21017 C.Costa di Samarate (Va) Italy; telephone +39-0331-225074; fax +39-0331-229046; or at <https://www.leonardocompany.com/en/home>.

(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.

(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, email fedreg.legal@nara.gov, or go to: <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/cfr/ibr-locations.html>.

Issued on February 1, 2021.

Lance T. Gant,

Director, Compliance & Airworthiness Division, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 2021-05199 Filed 3-9-21; 2:00 pm]