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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2020-0201; Product Identifier 2020-NM-007-AD; Amendment 39-21208; AD 2020-17-03]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus SAS Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The FAA is adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for certain Airbus SAS Model A318-111, -112, -121, and -122 airplanes; Model A319-111, -112, -113, -114, -115, -131, -132, and -133 airplanes; Model A320-211, -212, -214, -216, -231, -232, and -233 airplanes; and Model A321-111, -112, -131, -211, -212, -213, -231, and -232 airplanes. This AD was prompted by reports of fatigue cracks on continuity fittings at the lower framing of the front windshield on airplanes on which a certain production modification has been embodied. Additional analysis showed that certain certification requirements for damage tolerance and fatigue are not met on airplanes in a certain post-production modification configuration. This AD requires repetitive high frequency eddy current (HFEC) inspections of the central node windshield area for cracking, and applicable corrective actions if cracking is found, 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 is effective October 2, 2020.

The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of a certain publication listed in this AD as of October 2, 2020.

ADDRESSES: 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 IBR material on the EASA website at <https://ad.easa.europa.eu>. You may view this IBR material at the FAA, Airworthiness Products Section, Operational Safety Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 206-231-3195. It is also available in the AD docket on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2020-0201.

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-2020-0201; 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 final rule, any comments received, and other information. The address for Docket Operations is U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sanjay Ralhan, Aerospace Engineer, Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; telephone and fax 206-231-3223; email sanjay.ralhan@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Discussion

The EASA, which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union, has issued EASA AD 2020-0005, dated January 13, 2020 (“EASA AD 2020-0005”) (also referred to as the Mandatory Continuing Airworthiness Information, or “the MCAI”), to correct an unsafe condition for certain Airbus SAS Model A318-111, -112, -121, and -122 airplanes; Model A319-111, -112, -113, -114, -115, -131, -132, and -133 airplanes; Model A320-211, -212, -214, -215, -216, -231, -232, and -233 airplanes; and Model A321-111, -112, -131, -211, -212, -213, -231, and -232 airplanes. Model A320-215 airplanes are not certified by the FAA and are not included on the U.S. type certificate data sheet; this AD therefore does not include those airplanes in the applicability.

The FAA issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to amend 14 CFR part 39 by adding an AD that would apply to certain Airbus SAS Model A318-111, -112, -121, and -122 airplanes; Model A319-111, -112, -113, -114, -115, -131, -132, and -133 airplanes; Model A320-211, -212, -214, -216, -231, -232, and -233 airplanes; and Model A321-111, -112, -131, -211, -212, -213, -231, and -232 airplanes. The NPRM published in the Federal Register on March 20, 2020 (85 FR 16011). The NPRM was prompted by reports of fatigue cracks on continuity fittings at the lower framing of the front windshield on airplanes on which a certain production modification has been embodied. Additional analysis showed that certain certification requirements for damage tolerance and fatigue are not met on airplanes in a certain post-production modification configuration. The NPRM proposed to require repetitive HFEC inspections of the central node windshield area for cracking, and applicable corrective actions if cracking is found, as specified in an EASA AD.

The FAA is issuing this AD to address fatigue cracks on continuity fittings at the lower framing of the front windshield on airplanes on which Airbus Production Modification 22058 (which is included in Airbus Modification 21999) has been embodied. Additional analysis showed that certain certification requirements for damage tolerance and fatigue are not met on airplanes in a post-production Modification 22058 configuration. The FAA is issuing this AD to address this condition, which could lead to failure of the continuity fittings at the lower node of the windshield central frame, possibly resulting in decompression of the airplane and injury to occupants. See the MCAI for additional background information.

Comments

The FAA gave the public the opportunity to participate in developing this final rule. The following presents the comment received on the NPRM and the FAA's response.

Request To Allow Alternative Repair Methods

United Airlines requested that for the threshold inspection, instead of using the inspection procedures specified in Airbus Service Bulletin A320-53-1331, dated January 14, 2019 (“Airbus SB A320-53-1331”), the final rule allow operators to substitute previous repairs done using the procedures in Airworthiness Limitation Item (ALI) task 531129 [special detailed inspection of center node continuity fittings and windshield on the left-hand and right-hand sides] of the Airbus Model A318/A319/A320/A321 Airworthiness Limitations Section (ALS), and procedures for ongoing repairs that contain unique inspection programs, which are described in Airbus SB A320-53-1331. The commenter stated that this would prevent discrepancies when operators did threshold inspections using the procedures described in Airbus SB A320-53-1331. The commenter noted that the inspection procedures in Airbus SB A320-53-1331 are based on an assumption that the area of inspection has not been repaired.

In addition, the commenter remarked that paragraph (2) of EASA AD 2020-0005 partially addresses the issue of inspections done in areas that were previously repaired. The commenter pointed out that paragraph (2) of EASA AD 2020-0005 addresses only the central lower node continuity fittings but that the required inspection involves both the windshield frame and central lower node continuity fittings. The commenter explained that the central lower node fittings are a portion of the general lower windshield frame attachment inspection area. The commenter stated that it has airplanes with reinforcement repairs on the windshield frame and that those repairs were developed by Airbus. The commenter shared that the repair design approval sheet (RDAS) provided by Airbus stated “impact to ALI 531129” since the repair reinforced and covered the windshield frame pockets. The commenter concluded that a new inspection method and inspection intervals were defined in that RDAS.

Furthermore, the commenter noted that windshield replacement is a substantial cost and burden to operators, and alternative repairs are highly desirable to reduce the cost of a windshield frame and continuity fitting repair.

Although the FAA acknowledges the commenter's concern about window replacement costs, the agency disagrees with the commenter's request. The FAA is not aware of a global RDAS, issued under Airbus SAS's EASA Design Organization Approval, that is applicable to the entire U.S.-registered airplane fleet. The RDAS issued to United Airlines is specific to the configuration of the airplanes in United Airlines' fleet. Therefore, the FAA cannot revise corrective actions relative to the unsafe condition identified in this AD for the entire U.S.-registered fleet based on the United Airlines' fleet configuration, which was altered by certain previously approved repairs. Paragraph (i)(1) of this AD states that operators may use the procedures found in 14 CFR 39.19 to request an alternative method of compliance (AMOC) if an airplane's configuration does not allow compliance with the requirements of an AD.

In addition, paragraph (7) of EASA AD 2020-0005 specifies that accomplishment of inspections using ALI task 531129, as specified in table 1 to paragraph (1) of EASA AD 2020-0005, is acceptable for compliance with the requirements of paragraph (1) of EASA AD 2020-0005 for only the first inspection that is required after the effective date of that EASA AD.

EASA, the State of Design Authority for these airplane models, conducted a risk assessment, along with a cost benefit analysis, and developed corrective actions that are required to mitigate the risk of the unsafe condition addressed in EASA AD 2020-0005. The FAA finds that the service information specified in EASA AD 2020-0005, including the modification procedure in Airbus Service Bulletin A320-53-1329, dated December 21, 2018 (“Airbus SB A320-53-1329”), is necessary to address the unsafe condition. The purpose of the actions specified in Airbus SB A320-53-1329 is to prevent cracks on the front windshield frame and continuity fitting by installing reinforced parts. Therefore, the FAA has not revised this AD regarding this issue.

Conclusion

The FAA reviewed the relevant data, considered the comment received, and determined that air safety and the public interest require adopting this final rule as proposed, except for minor editorial changes. The FAA has determined that these minor changes:

- Are consistent with the intent that was proposed in the NPRM for addressing the unsafe condition; and
- Do not add any additional burden upon the public than was already proposed in the NPRM.

Related IBR Material Under 1 CFR Part 51

EASA AD 2020-0005 describes procedures for repetitive HFEC inspections of the central node windshield area for cracking, and applicable corrective actions if cracking is found. The corrective actions include modification or repair. 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.

Costs of Compliance

The FAA estimates that this AD affects 1,203 airplanes 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
19 work-hours × \$85 per hour = \$1,615	\$0	\$1,615	\$1,942,845

* Table does not include estimated costs for reporting.

The FAA estimates that it would take about 1 work-hour per product to comply with the reporting requirement in this AD. The average labor rate is \$85 per hour. Based on these figures, the FAA estimates the cost of reporting the inspection results on U.S. operators to be \$102,255, or \$85 per product.

The FAA estimates the following costs to do any necessary on-condition modifications that would be required based on the results of any required actions. The FAA has no way of determining the number of aircraft that might need these on-condition modifications:

Estimated Costs of On-Condition Modifications *

Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product
1,122 work-hours × \$85 per hour = \$95,370	\$316,043	\$411,413

* The FAA has received no definitive data that would enable the agency to provide cost estimates for the on-condition repairs specified in this AD.

Paperwork Reduction Act

A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, nor shall a person be subject to penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a current valid OMB control number. The control number for the collection of information required by this AD is 2120-0056. The paperwork cost associated with this AD has been detailed in the Costs of Compliance section of this document and includes time for reviewing instructions, as well as

completing and reviewing the collection of information. Therefore, all reporting associated with this AD is mandatory. Comments concerning the accuracy of this burden and suggestions for reducing the burden should be directed to Information Collection Clearance Officer, Federal Aviation Administration, 10101 Hillwood Parkway, Fort Worth, TX 76177-1524.

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

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) Will not affect intrastate aviation in Alaska, and
- (3) 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.

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):



2020-17-03 Airbus SAS: Amendment 39-21208; Docket No. FAA-2020-0201; Product Identifier 2020-NM-007-AD.

(a) Effective Date

This AD is effective October 2, 2020.

(b) Affected ADs

None.

(c) Applicability

This AD applies to Airbus SAS Model airplanes specified in paragraphs (c)(1) through (4) of this AD, certificated in any category, as identified in European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD 2020-0005, dated January 13, 2020 (“EASA AD 2020-0005”).

- (1) Model A318-111, -112, -121, and -122 airplanes.
- (2) Model A319-111, -112, -113, -114, -115, -131, -132, and -133 airplanes.
- (3) Model A320-211, -212, -214, -216, -231, -232, and -233 airplanes.
- (4) Model A321-111, -112, -131, -211, -212, -213, -231, and -232 airplanes.

(d) Subject

Air Transport Association (ATA) of America Code 53, Fuselage.

(e) Reason

This AD was prompted by reports of fatigue cracks on continuity fittings at the lower framing of the front windshield on airplanes on which Airbus Production Modification 22058 (which is included in Airbus Modification 21999) has been embodied. Additional analysis showed that certain certification requirements for damage tolerance and fatigue are not met on airplanes in a post-production Modification 22058 configuration. The FAA is issuing this AD to address this condition, which could lead to failure of the continuity fittings at the lower node of the windshield central frame, possibly resulting in decompression of the airplane and injury to occupants.

(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 2020-0005.

(h) Exceptions to EASA AD 2020-0005

(1) Where EASA AD 2020-0005 refers to its effective date, this AD requires using the effective date of this AD.

(2) The “Remarks” section of EASA AD 2020-0005 does not apply to this AD.

(3) Paragraph (8) of EASA AD 2020-0005 specifies to report inspection results to Airbus within a certain compliance time. For this AD, report inspection results at the applicable time specified in paragraph (h)(3)(i) or (ii) of this AD.

(i) If the inspection was done on or after the effective date of this AD: Submit the report within 90 days after the inspection.

(ii) If the inspection was done before the effective date of this AD: Submit the report within 90 days after the effective date of this AD.

(i) Other FAA AD Provisions

The following provisions also apply to this AD:

(1) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs): The Manager, Large Aircraft Section, 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 Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, send it to the attention of the person identified in paragraph (j) of this AD. Information may be emailed to: 9-AVS-AIR-730-AMOC@faa.gov. 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.

(2) Contacting the Manufacturer: For any requirement in this AD to obtain instructions from a manufacturer, the instructions must be accomplished using a method approved by the Manager, Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, FAA; or EASA; or Airbus SAS's EASA Design Organization Approval (DOA). If approved by the DOA, the approval must include the DOA-authorized signature.

(3) Required for Compliance (RC): For any service information referenced in EASA AD 2020-0005 that contains RC procedures and tests: Except as required by paragraph (i)(2) of this AD, RC procedures and tests must be done to comply with this AD; any procedures or tests that are not identified as RC are recommended. Those procedures and tests that are not identified as RC may be deviated from using accepted methods in accordance with the operator's maintenance or inspection program without obtaining approval of an AMOC, provided the procedures and tests identified as RC can be done and the airplane can be put back in an airworthy condition. Any substitutions or changes to procedures or tests identified as RC require approval of an AMOC.

(4) Paperwork Reduction Act Burden Statement: A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a current valid OMB Control Number. The OMB Control Number for this information collection is 2120-0056. Public reporting for this collection of information is estimated to be approximately 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. All responses to this collection of information are mandatory as required by this AD. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Information Collection Clearance Officer, Federal Aviation Administration, 10101 Hillwood Parkway, Fort Worth, TX 76177-1524.

(j) Related Information

For more information about this AD, contact Sanjay Ralhan, Aerospace Engineer, Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; telephone and fax 206-231-3223; email sanjay.ralhan@faa.gov.

(k) 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 2020-0005, dated January 13, 2020.

(ii) [Reserved]

(3) For information about EASA AD 2020-0005, 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 material at the FAA, Airworthiness Products Section, Operational Safety Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 206-231-3195. 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-2020-0201.

(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 August 6, 2020.

Lance T. Gant,

Director, Compliance & Airworthiness Division, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 2020-18930 Filed 8-27-20; 8:45 am]