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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2018-0091; Product Identifier 2017-SW-054-AD; Amendment 39-19334; AD 2018-15-02]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters

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

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for Airbus Helicopters Model AS350B, AS350B1, AS350B2, AS350B3, AS350BA, AS355E, AS355F, AS355F1, AS355F2, AS355N, and AS355NP helicopters. This AD requires inspecting the tail rotor (TR) pitch rod. This AD is prompted by a report of several cases of damaged TR pitch rod ball joints. The actions of this AD are intended to correct an unsafe condition on these helicopters.

DATES: This AD becomes effective August 3, 2018.

We must receive comments on this AD by September 17, 2018.

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

- Federal eRulemaking Docket: Go to <http://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 <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2018-0091; 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 Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD, the economic evaluation, any comments received, and other information. The street address for Docket Operations (telephone 800-647-5527) is in the ADDRESSES section. Comments will be available in the AD docket shortly after receipt.

For service information identified in this final rule, contact Airbus Helicopters, 2701 N. Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, TX 75052; telephone (972) 641-0000 or (800) 232-0323; fax (972) 641-3775; or at http://www.helicopters.airbus.com/website/en/ref/Technical-Support_73.html. 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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David Hatfield, Aviation Safety Engineer, Safety Management Section, Rotorcraft Standards Branch, FAA, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy., Fort Worth, TX 76177; telephone (817) 222-5110; email david.hatfield@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

This AD is a final rule that involves requirements affecting flight safety, and we did not provide you with notice and an opportunity to provide your comments prior to it becoming effective. However, we invite you to participate in this rulemaking by submitting written comments, data, or views. We also invite comments relating to the economic, environmental, energy, or federalism impacts that resulted from adopting this AD. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the AD, explain the reason for any recommended change, and include supporting data. To ensure the docket does not contain duplicate comments, commenters should send only one copy of written comments, or if comments are filed electronically, commenters should submit them only one time. We will file in the docket all comments that we receive, as well as a report summarizing each substantive public contact with FAA personnel concerning this rulemaking during the comment period. We will consider all the comments we receive and may conduct additional rulemaking based on those comments.

Discussion

EASA, which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union, has issued Emergency AD No. 2017-0020-E, dated February 7, 2017, to correct an unsafe condition for Airbus Helicopters Model AS 350 B, AS 350 BA, AS 350 BB, AS 350 B1, AS 350 B2, AS 350 B3, AS 355 E, AS 355 F, AS 355 F1, AS 355 F2, AS 355 N and AS 355 NP helicopters with modification (MOD) 075601 or MOD 076602 installed. EASA advises of several reports of damaged horn-side TR pitch rod elastomeric ball joints, and of an on-going investigation to determine the cause of the damage. EASA states that this condition could result in loss of control of the helicopter. To address this unsafe condition, the EASA AD requires repetitive inspections of the TR pitch rod. While the inspections are contained in the Airworthiness Limitations Section of the helicopter maintenance manual, the EASA AD reduces the interval from 50 flight hours to 10 flight hours.

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 and determined the unsafe condition exists and is likely to exist or develop on other helicopters of these same type designs.

Related Service Information

We reviewed Airbus Helicopters Emergency Alert Service Bulletin (EASB) No. 05.00.86 for Model AS350-series helicopters and EASB No. 05.00.75 for Model AS355-series helicopters, both Revision 1 and both dated February 6, 2017. This service information contains procedures for inspecting the TR pitch change rod elastomeric ball joint for damage.

AD Requirements

This AD requires, for helicopters with a TR pitch change rod elastomeric ball joint installed, within 10 hours time-in-service (TIS) and thereafter at intervals not exceeding 10 hours TIS, inspecting each face of the TR pitch rod blade side ball joint for debonding, extrusion, and a crack. If there is debonding, extrusion, or a crack with a circumference of 90 degrees or more, this AD requires replacing the TR pitch rod before further flight. Airbus Helicopters identifies the installation of a TR pitch change rod elastomeric ball joint as MOD 075601 or MOD 076602.

Differences Between This AD and the EASA AD

The EASA AD applies to Airbus Helicopters Model AS 350 BB helicopters. This AD does not as that model is not type-certificated in the U.S.

Interim Action

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

Costs of Compliance

We estimate that this AD affects 896 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 hour, inspecting the TR pitch rod ball joint requires 0.5 hour, for a cost of \$43 per helicopter and \$38,528 for the U.S. fleet, per inspection cycle.

If required, replacing a TR pitch rod requires one work-hour and required parts cost \$3,174, for a cost per helicopter of \$3,259.

FAA's Justification and Determination of the Effective Date

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 the inspections required by this AD must be accomplished within 10 hours TIS and thereafter every 10 hours TIS. Therefore, we find good cause that notice and opportunity for prior public comment are impracticable. In addition, for the reason stated above, we find that good cause exists 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.

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 products identified in this rulemaking action.

Regulatory Findings

We 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;
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 adding the following new airworthiness directive (AD):



2018-15-02 Airbus Helicopters: Amendment 39-19334; Docket No. FAA-2018-0091; Product Identifier 2017-SW-054-AD.

(a) Applicability

This AD applies to Airbus Helicopters Model AS350B, AS350B1, AS350B2, AS350B3, AS350BA, AS355E, AS355F, AS355F1, AS355F2, AS355N, and AS355NP helicopters, certificated in any category, with a tail rotor (TR) pitch change rod elastomeric ball joint installed.

Note 1 to paragraph (a): Airbus Helicopters modification (MOD) 075601 and MOD 076602 consist of replacing the TR pitch change rod with an elastomeric ball joint rod.

(b) Unsafe Condition

This AD defines the unsafe condition as a damaged elastomeric ball joint on the TR pitch change rod. This condition could result in failure of the TR pitch change rod and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

(c) Effective Date

This AD becomes effective August 3, 2018.

(d) 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.

(e) Required Actions

Within 10 hours time-in-service (TIS) and thereafter at intervals not exceeding 10 hours TIS:

(1) Manually induce a flapping movement in the TR blade until the pitch change rod rotates a minimum of 10 degrees.

(2) Inspect both faces of the blade side of the ball joint elastomer for debonding, extrusion, and cracks. If there is a crack or any debonding or extrusion with a circumference of 90 or more degrees, before further flight, replace the pitch change rod.

(f) Special Flight Permits

Special flight permits are prohibited.

(g) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, Safety Management Section, Rotorcraft Standards Branch, FAA, may approve AMOCs for this AD. Send your proposal to: David Hatfield, Aviation Safety Engineer, Safety

Management Section, Rotorcraft Standards Branch, 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.

(h) Additional Information

(1) Airbus Helicopters Emergency Alert Service Bulletin (EASB) No. 05.00.86 and EASB No. 05.00.75, both Revision 1 and both dated February 6, 2017, which are not incorporated by reference, contain additional information about the subject of this AD. For service information identified in this AD, contact Airbus Helicopters, 2701 N. Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, TX 75052; telephone (972) 641-0000 or (800) 232-0323; fax (972) 641-3775; or at http://www.helicopters.airbus.com/website/en/ref/Technical-Support_73.html. 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) Emergency AD No. 2017-0020-E, dated February 7, 2017. You may view the EASA Emergency AD on the internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating it in Docket No. FAA-2018-0091.

(i) Subject

Joint Aircraft Service Component (JASC) Code: 6720 Tail Rotor Control System.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on July 6, 2018.

Scott A. Horn,
Deputy Director for Regulatory Operations, Compliance & Airworthiness Division,
Aircraft Certification Service.