

FAA Airworthiness Directive

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Federal Aviation Administration
14 CFR Part 39 [62 FR 61223 NO. 221 11/17/97]
Docket No. 97-SW-17-AD;
Amendment 39-10206;

AD 97-12-02

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives;

McDonnell Douglas Helicopter Systems MD900 Helicopters

Preamble Information

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments

SUMMARY: This amendment supersedes an existing priority letter airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to McDonnell Douglas Helicopter Systems (MDHS) Model MD900 helicopters, which prohibits flight or ground operations of helicopters with a certain adjustable collective drive link assembly (link assembly) installed. This amendment requires installation of a redesigned airworthy link assembly after which further operations are permitted. This amendment is prompted by recent incidents in which the link assembly failed during flight. The actions specified by this AD are intended to prevent failure of the link assembly, which could result in loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Effective December 2, 1997.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before January 16, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97-SW-17-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Greg DiLibero, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Blvd., Lakewood, California 90712, telephone (562) 627-5231, fax (562) 627-5210.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

On May 29, 1997, the FAA issued priority letter AD 97-12-02, applicable to MDHS Model MD900 helicopters with collective drive link assembly (link assembly) part number (P/N) 900C2010233-103 and P/N 900C2010233-105, installed, which prohibits flight or ground operations of the helicopters. That action was prompted by recent incidents in which the link assembly failed during flight. The link assembly is part of the primary collective flight control system. Based on these incidents and further testing by the manufacturer, the FAA determined that further operations with either affected link assembly installed constituted an unsafe condition. That condition, if not corrected, could result in failure of the link assembly and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

Since the issuance of that AD, MDHS has issued MDHS Service Bulletin (SB) No. SB900-055R1, dated June 5, 1997, for the installation of a redesigned link assembly. The FAA has determined that installation of redesigned link assembly, P/N 900C2010233-107, will correct the unsafe condition. Additionally, in AD 97-12-02, the FAA has noted that the applicability section incorrectly stated that the AD applied to Model MD900 helicopters with P/N 900C2010233-103 and P/N 900C2010233-105 installed. The AD should have stated that it applied to Model MD900 helicopters with P/N 900C2010233-103 or P/N 900C2010233-105 installed. This imprecision in word choice is corrected in

FAA Airworthiness Directive

this AD.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other MDHS Model MD900 helicopters of the same type design, this AD supersedes AD 97-12-02 to require installation of a redesigned link assembly. This AD also clarifies the applicability statement that could be incorrectly interpreted to mean that two link assemblies must be installed in order for the AD to be applicable.

Since a situation exists that requires the immediate adoption of this regulation, it is found that notice and opportunity for prior public comment hereon are impracticable, and that good cause exists for making this amendment effective in less than 30 days.

Comments Invited

Although this action is in the form of a final rule that involves requirements affecting flight safety and, thus, was not preceded by notice and an opportunity for public comment, comments are invited on this rule. Interested persons are invited to comment on this rule by submitting such written data, views, or arguments as they may desire. Communications should identify the Rules Docket number and be submitted in triplicate to the address specified under the caption "ADDRESSES." All communications received on or before the closing date for comments will be considered, and this rule may be amended in light of the comments received. Factual information that supports the commenter's ideas and suggestions is extremely helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of the AD action and determining whether additional rulemaking action would be needed.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the rule that might suggest a need to modify the rule. All comments submitted will be available, both before and after the closing date for comments, in the Rules Docket for examination by interested persons. A report that summarizes each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this AD will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their comments submitted in response to this rule must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket No. 97-SW-17-AD." The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

The regulations adopted herein will not have substantial direct effects 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. Therefore, in accordance with Executive Order 12612, it is determined that this final rule does not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

The FAA has determined that this regulation is an emergency regulation that must be issued immediately to correct an unsafe condition in aircraft, and that it is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866. It has been determined further that this action involves an emergency regulation under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979). If it is determined that this emergency regulation otherwise would be significant under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures, a final regulatory evaluation will be prepared and placed in the Rules Docket. A copy of it, if filed, may be obtained from the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption "ADDRESSES."

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Safety.

Adoption of the Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation

FAA Airworthiness Directive

Administration amends part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) as follows:

PART 39 - AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 USC 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 - [Amended]

2. Section 39.13 is amended by adding a new airworthiness directive to read as follows:

97-12-02 MCDONNELL DOUGLAS HELICOPTER SYSTEMS: Amendment 39-10206. Docket No. 97-SW-17-AD.

Applicability: Model MD900 helicopters, with adjustable collective drive link assembly (link assembly), part number (P/N) 900C2010233-103 or -105, installed, certificated in any category.

NOTE 1: This AD applies to each helicopter identified in the preceding applicability provision, regardless of whether it has been modified, altered, or repaired in the area subject to the requirements of this AD. For helicopters that have been modified, altered, or repaired so that the performance of the requirements of this AD is affected, the owner/operator must use the authority provided in paragraph (b) to request approval from the FAA. This approval may address either no action, if the current configuration eliminates the unsafe condition, or different actions necessary to address the unsafe condition described in this AD. Such a request should include an assessment of the effect of the changed configuration on the unsafe condition addressed by this AD. In no case does the presence of any modification, alteration, or repair remove any helicopter from the applicability of this AD.

Compliance: Required as indicated, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent failure of the link assembly, which could result in loss of control of the helicopter, accomplish the following:

(a) Before further flight, remove the link assembly, P/N 900C2010233-103 or -105, and replace with link assembly, P/N 900C2010233-107.

(b) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used if approved by the Manager, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office. Operators shall submit their requests through an FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may concur or comment and then send it to the Manager, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office.

NOTE 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office.

(c) Special flight permits will not be issued.

(d) This amendment becomes effective on December 2, 1997.