[4910-13-P]

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2018-0647; Product Identifier 2017-SW-083-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Bell Helicopter Textron Canada Limited Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: We propose to adopt a new airworthiness directive (AD) for Bell Helicopter Textron Canada Limited (Bell) Model 429 helicopters. This proposed AD would revise the life limit for the nose landing gear (NLG) assembly. This proposed AD is prompted by revised airworthiness limitations determined by Bell. The actions of this proposed AD are intended to prevent an unsafe condition on these helicopters.

DATES: We must receive comments on this proposed AD by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

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-2018-0647; 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 proposed AD, the Transport Canada 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 proposed rule, contact Bell Helicopter Textron Canada Limited, 12,800 Rue de l'Avenir, Mirabel, Quebec J7J1R4; telephone (450) 437-2862 or (800) 363-8023; fax (450) 433-0272; or at http://www.bellcustomer.com/files/. 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: Matt Fuller, Senior Aviation Safety Engineer, Safety Management Section, Rotorcraft Standards Branch, FAA, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy., Fort Worth, TX 76177; telephone (817) 222-5110; email matthew.fuller@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

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 might result from adopting the proposals in this document. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the proposal, 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 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 proposed rulemaking. Before acting on this proposal, we will consider all comments we receive on or before the closing date for comments. We will consider comments filed after the comment period has closed if it is possible to do so without incurring expense or delay. We may change this proposal in light of the comments we receive.

Discussion

Transport Canada, which is the aviation authority for Canada, has issued Canadian AD No. CF-2016-07, dated March 4, 2016, to correct an unsafe condition for Bell Model 429 helicopters with wheeled landing gear. Transport Canada advises that Bell has replaced the airworthiness limitations for the NLG main fitting to bell crank bolt part number (P/N) M084-20H125-101 and NLG main fitting P/N M084-20H011-107 with an airworthiness limitation for the next higher assembly, NLG assembly P/N 429-

336-100-101. According to Transport Canada, the NLG assembly's life limit is reduced to 50,000 retirement index number (RIN) or 4,500 hours time-in-service (TIS). Transport Canada advises that failure to replace components prior to established airworthiness limitations could result in an unsafe condition.

FAA's Determination

These helicopters have been approved by the aviation authority of Canada and are approved for operation in the United States. Pursuant to our bilateral agreement with Canada, Transport Canada, its technical representative, has notified us of the unsafe condition described in its AD. We are proposing this AD because we evaluated all known relevant information and determined that an unsafe condition is likely to exist or develop on other helicopters of the same type design.

Related Service Information

We reviewed Bell Alert Service Bulletin No. 429-15-24, Revision A, dated September 23, 2015, which specifies updating the Bell 429 maintenance manual with Revision 24 to incorporate the revised airworthiness limitations for the NLG assembly, NLG main fitting to bellcrank bolt, and the NLG main fitting.

Proposed AD Requirements

This proposed AD would revise the life limit of the NLG assembly by requiring, before further flight, removing from service any NLG assembly P/N 429-336-100-101 that has reached or exceeded 4,500 hours TIS or 50,000 RIN. Thereafter, this proposed AD would require removing from service each NLG assembly P/N 429-336-100-101 before it accumulates 4,500 hours TIS or 50,000 RIN, whichever occurs first.

Differences between this Proposed AD and the Transport Canada AD

The Transport Canada AD applies to certain serial-numbered helicopters, whereas this proposed AD would apply to all Bell Model 429 helicopters with the affected NLG assembly installed.

Costs of Compliance

We estimate that this proposed AD would affect less than 75 helicopters of U.S. Registry (as this proposed AD would not apply to Bell Model 429 helicopters with skid landing gear). At an average labor rate of $85 per hour, replacing a NLG assembly would require 10 work-hours, and required parts would cost $104,648, for a cost of $105,498 per helicopter and up to $7,912,350 for the U.S. fleet.

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 proposed AD would not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132. This proposed 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, I certify this proposed regulation:

1. Is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866;

2. Is not a "significant rule" under the 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 proposed 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.

The Proposed Amendment

Accordingly, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the FAA proposes to amend 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):

Bell Helicopter Textron Canada Limited: Docket No. FAA-2018-0647; Product Identifier 2017-SW-083-AD.

(a) Applicability

This AD applies to Bell Helicopter Textron Canada Limited Model 429 helicopters with a nose landing gear (NLG) assembly part number (P/N) 429-336-100-101 installed, certificated in any category.

(b) Unsafe Condition

This AD defines the unsafe condition as fatigue failure of an NLG assembly, which could result in subsequent damage to and loss of control of the helicopter.

(c) Comments Due Date

We must receive comments by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE Federal Register].

(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

Before further flight, remove from service any NLG assembly P/N 429-336-100-101 that has reached or exceeded 4,500 hours time-in-service (TIS) or 50,000 retirement index number (RIN). Thereafter, remove from service each NLG assembly P/N 429-336-

100-101 before accumulating 4,500 hours TIS or 50,000 RIN, whichever occurs first. For purposes of this AD, for every normal retraction or extension of the wheeled landing gear system, add one RIN.

(f) 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: Matt Fuller, Senior 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.

(g) Additional Information

(1) Bell Helicopter Alert Service Bulletin No. 429-15-24, Revision A, dated September 23, 2015, which is not incorporated by reference, contains additional information about the subject of this AD. For service information identified in this AD, contact Bell Helicopter Textron Canada Limited, 12,800 Rue de l'Avenir, Mirabel, Quebec J7J1R4; telephone (450) 437-2862 or (800) 363-8023; fax (450) 433-0272; or at http://www.bellcustomer.com/files/. 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.

(2) The subject of this AD is addressed in Transport Canada AD No. CF-2016-07, dated March 4, 2016. You may view the Transport Canada AD on the Internet at http://www.regulations.gov in the AD Docket.

(h) Subject

Joint Aircraft Service Component (JASC) Code: 3200 Nose Landing Gear.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on July 9, 2018.

Lance T. Gant,

Director, Compliance & Airworthiness Division,
Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 2018-15305 Filed: 7/18/2018 8:45 am; Publication Date: 7/19/2018]