



[4910-13-P]

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**Federal Aviation Administration**

**14 CFR Part 39**

**[Docket No. FAA-2019-0250; Product Identifier 2018-NM-157-AD]**

**RIN 2120-AA64**

**Airworthiness Directives; Airbus SAS Airplanes**

**AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

**SUMMARY:** We propose to supersede Airworthiness Directive (AD) 2015-17-14, which applies to all Airbus SAS Model A319 series airplanes; Model A320-211, -212, -214, -231, -232, and -233 airplanes, and Model A321-111, -112, -131, -211, -212, -213, -231, and -232 airplanes. AD 2015-17-14 requires repetitive rototest inspections of the open tack holes and rivet holes at the cargo floor support fittings of the fuselage, including doing all applicable related investigative actions, and repair if necessary. Since we issued AD 2015-17-14, further analysis and widespread fatigue damage (WFD) evaluations identified the need to reduce the initial compliance times and repetitive intervals for the inspections for certain airplanes, and to add work for certain airplanes. This proposed AD would continue to require the actions of AD 2015-17-14, would add actions for certain airplanes, and would reduce the compliance times for certain airplanes, as specified in an European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD, which will be incorporated by reference. This proposed AD would also reduce the

applicability. We are proposing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products.

**DATES:** We must receive comments on this proposed AD by [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

**ADDRESSES:** You may send comments, using the procedures found in 14 CFR 11.43 and 11.45, by any of the following methods:

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

For the incorporation by reference (IBR) material described in the “Related IBR material under 1 CFR part 51” section in SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION, contact EASA, Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer 3, 50668 Cologne, Germany; telephone +49 221 89990 1000; email [ADs@easa.europa.eu](mailto:ADs@easa.europa.eu); Internet [www.easa.europa.eu](http://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, Transport Standards 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 <http://www.regulations.gov>.

### **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-2019-0250; 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 NPRM, the regulatory 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 FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Sanjay Ralhan, Aerospace Engineer, International Section, Transport Standards Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; telephone and fax 206-231-3223.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

#### **Comments Invited**

We invite you to send any written relevant data, views, or arguments about this proposal. Send your comments to an address listed under the ADDRESSES section. Include “Docket No. FAA-2019-0250; Product Identifier 2018-NM-157-AD” at the beginning of your comments. We specifically invite comments on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of this NPRM. We will consider all comments received by the closing date and may amend this NPRM based on those comments.

We will post all comments we receive, without change, to <http://www.regulations.gov>, including any personal information you provide. We will also post a report summarizing each substantive verbal contact we receive about this NPRM.

## **Discussion**

Fatigue damage can occur locally, in small areas or structural design details, or globally, in widespread areas. Multiple-site damage is widespread damage that occurs in a large structural element such as a single rivet line of a lap splice joining two large skin panels. Widespread damage can also occur in multiple elements such as adjacent frames or stringers. Multiple-site damage and multiple-element damage cracks are typically too small initially to be reliably detected with normal inspection methods. Without intervention, these cracks will grow, and eventually compromise the structural integrity of the airplane. This condition is known as WFD. It is associated with general degradation of large areas of structure with similar structural details and stress levels. As an airplane ages, WFD will likely occur, and will certainly occur if the airplane is operated long enough without any intervention.

The FAA's WFD final rule (75 FR 69746, November 15, 2010) became effective on January 14, 2011. The WFD rule requires certain actions to prevent structural failure due to WFD throughout the operational life of certain existing transport category airplanes and all of these airplanes that will be certificated in the future. For existing and future airplanes subject to the WFD rule, the rule requires that design approval holders (DAHs) establish a limit of validity (LOV) of the engineering data that support the

structural maintenance program. Operators affected by the WFD rule may not fly an airplane beyond its LOV, unless an extended LOV is approved.

The WFD rule (75 FR 69746, November 15, 2010) does not require identifying and developing maintenance actions if the DAHs can show that such actions are not necessary to prevent WFD before the airplane reaches the LOV. Many LOVs, however, do depend on accomplishment of future maintenance actions. As stated in the WFD rule, any maintenance actions necessary to reach the LOV will be mandated by airworthiness directives through separate rulemaking actions.

In the context of WFD, this action is necessary to enable DAHs to propose LOVs that allow operators the longest operational lives for their airplanes, and still ensure that WFD will not occur. This approach allows for an implementation strategy that provides flexibility to DAHs in determining the timing of service information development (with FAA approval), while providing operators with certainty regarding the LOV applicable to their airplanes.

We issued AD 2015-17-14, Amendment 39-18247 (80 FR 52182, August 28, 2015) (“AD 2015-17-14”), for all Airbus SAS Model A319 series airplanes; Model A320-211, -212, -214, -231, -232, and -233 airplanes, and Model A321-111, -112, -131, -211, -212, -213, -231, and -232 airplanes. AD 2015-17-14 requires repetitive rototest inspections of the open tack holes and rivet holes at the cargo floor support fittings of the fuselage, including doing all applicable related investigative actions, and repair if necessary. AD 2015-17-14 resulted from reports that during a full-scale fatigue test, several broken frames in certain areas of the cargo compartment were found, especially

on the cargo floor support fittings and open tack holes on the left-hand side. We issued AD 2015-17-14 to address cracking in the open tack holes and rivet holes at the cargo floor support fittings of the fuselage, which could affect the structural integrity of the airplane.

#### **Actions Since AD 2015-17-14 was Issued**

Since we issued AD 2015-17-14, further analysis and WFD evaluations identified the need to reduce the compliance time for the repetitive inspections for certain airplanes, and to add work for certain airplanes, and remove certain airplanes from the applicability.

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union, has issued EASA Airworthiness Directive 2018-0233R1, dated November 28, 2018 (referred to after this as the Mandatory Continuing Airworthiness Information, or “the MCAI”), to correct an unsafe condition for certain Airbus SAS Model A319 series 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 MCAI states:

During a full scale fatigue test, several broken frames in the cargo compartment area between Frame (FR) 50 and FR63 have been found, especially on the cargo floor support fittings and open tack holes on left hand (LH) side.

This condition, if not detected and corrected, could affect the structural integrity of the aeroplane.

To address this unsafe condition, Airbus issued SB [service bulletin] A320-53-1257, providing inspection instructions, and SB A320-53-1261, providing modification instructions.

Consequently, EASA published AD 2013-0310 [which corresponds to FAA AD 2015-17-14], requiring repetitive inspections of the frames in the cargo compartment area

and of the cargo floor support fittings and open tack holes on the LH side and, depending on findings, accomplishment of corrective action(s). That [EASA] AD also required a modification, which constituted terminating action for the required repetitive inspections.

After that [EASA] AD was issued, further analyses and widespread fatigue damage evaluations identified the need to reduce the threshold and intervals for the repetitive inspections for certain configurations, and Airbus issued the inspection SB accordingly. Airbus issued SB A320-53-1360, SB A320-53-1364 and SB A320-53-1365 to supplement SB A320-53-1261, and SB Information Transmission (SBIT) 16-0070 providing additional information. Consequently, EASA issued AD 2018-0233, retaining the requirements of EASA AD 2013-0310, which was superseded, but requiring accomplishment of the repetitive inspections within reduced compliance times for certain configurations. That [EASA] AD also required additional work for aeroplanes that had already been modified in accordance with the instructions of Airbus SB A320-53-1261, Rev. 02.

Since that [EASA] AD was issued, it has been determined that certain A319 aeroplanes may be excluded from the Applicability of the [EASA] AD, since the calculated compliance time for the initial inspection is beyond the applicable limit of validity.

For the reason described above, this [EASA] AD is revised to reduce the Applicability.

You may examine the MCAI in the AD docket on the Internet at

<http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2019-0250.

### **Explanation of Retained Requirements**

Although this proposed AD does not explicitly restate the requirements of AD 2015-17-14, this proposed AD would retain certain requirements of AD 2015-17-14. Those requirements are referenced in EASA AD 2018-0233R1, which, in turn, is referenced in paragraph (g) of this proposed AD.

### **Related IBR Material Under 1 CFR part 51**

EASA AD 2018-0233R1 describes procedures for repetitive inspections of the open tack holes and rivet holes of the fuselage frames below the cargo floor support fittings for cracking. 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, and it is publicly available through the EASA website.

### **FAA's Determination and Requirements of this Proposed AD**

This product has been approved by the aviation authority of another country, and is approved for operation in the United States. Pursuant to our bilateral agreement with the State of Design Authority, we have been notified of the unsafe condition described in the MCAI referenced above. We are proposing this AD because we evaluated all pertinent information and determined an unsafe condition exists and is likely to exist or develop on other products of the same type design.

### **Proposed Requirements of this NPRM**

This proposed AD would require accomplishing the actions specified in EASA AD 2018-0233R1 described previously, as incorporated by reference, except for any differences identified as exceptions in the regulatory text of this AD.

### **Explanation of Required Compliance Information**

In the FAA's ongoing efforts to improve the efficiency of the AD process, the FAA worked with Airbus and EASA to develop a process to use certain EASA ADs as the primary source of information for compliance with requirements for corresponding FAA ADs. As a result, EASA AD 2018-0233R1 will be incorporated by reference in the

FAA final rule. This proposed AD would, therefore, require compliance with the provisions specified in EASA AD 2018-0233R1, through that incorporation, except for any differences identified as exceptions in the regulatory text of this proposed AD.

Service information specified in EASA AD 2018-0233R1 that is required for compliance with EASA AD 2018-0233R1 will be available on the Internet

<http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2019-0250 after the FAA final rule is published.

**Costs of Compliance**

We estimate that this proposed AD affects 1,009 airplanes of U.S. registry. We estimate the following costs to comply with this proposed AD:

**Estimated costs for required actions**

| <b>Action</b>                       | <b>Labor cost</b>                               | <b>Parts cost</b> | <b>Cost per product</b> | <b>Cost on U.S. operators</b> |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Retained actions from AD 2015-17-14 | Up to 471 work-hours X \$85 per hour = \$40,035 | \$0               | Up to \$40,035          | Up to \$40,395,315            |
| New proposed actions                | Up to 474 work-hours X 85 per hour = \$40,290   | \$13,000          | Up to \$53,290          | Up to \$53,769,610            |

We have received no definitive data that would enable us to provide cost estimates for the on-condition actions specified in this proposed AD.

**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.

This proposed AD is issued in accordance with authority delegated by the Executive Director, Aircraft Certification Service, as authorized by FAA Order 8000.51C. In accordance with that order, issuance of ADs is normally a function of the Compliance and Airworthiness Division, but during this transition period, the Executive Director has delegated the authority to issue ADs applicable to transport category airplanes and associated appliances to the Director of the System Oversight Division.

### **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 above, 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; 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.

#### **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 removing Airworthiness Directive (AD) 2015-17-14, Amendment 39-18247 (80 FR 52182, August 28, 2015), and adding the following new AD:

**Airbus SAS:** Docket No. FAA-2019-0250; Product Identifier 2018-NM-157-AD.

#### **(a) Comments Due Date**

We must receive comments by [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

**(b) Affected ADs**

This AD replaces AD 2015-17-14, Amendment 39-18247 (80 FR 52182, August 28, 2015) (“AD 2015-17-14”).

**(c) Applicability**

This AD applies to Airbus SAS 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; certificated in any category, as identified in European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD 2018-0233R1, dated November 28, 2018 (“EASA AD 2018-0233R1”).

**(d) Subject**

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

**(e) Reason**

This AD was prompted by further analysis and widespread fatigue damage (WFD) evaluations and full-scale fatigue testing that indicated that several broken frames in certain areas of the cargo compartment were found, especially on the cargo floor support fittings and open tack holes on the left-hand side, which identified the need to reduce the initial compliance times and repetitive intervals for the inspections for certain airplanes, and to add work for certain airplanes. We are issuing this AD to address cracking in the open tack holes and rivet holes at the cargo floor support fittings of the fuselage, which could affect the structural integrity of the airplane.

**(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 2018-0233R1.

**(h) Exceptions to EASA AD 2018-0233R1**

(1) For purposes of determining compliance with the requirements of this AD: Where EASA AD 2018-0233R1 refers to “the effective date of the original issue of this AD,” this AD requires using the effective date of this AD, and where EASA AD 2018-0233R1 refers to “the effective date of EASA AD 2013-0310,” this AD requires using October 2, 2015 (the effective date of AD 2015-17-14).

(2) The “Remarks” section of EASA AD 2018-0233R1 does not apply to this AD.

**(i) Other FAA AD Provisions**

The following provisions also apply to this AD:

(1) *Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)*: The Manager, International Section, Transport Standards 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 International Section, send it to the attention of the person identified in paragraph (j)(2) of this AD. Information may be emailed to: 9-ANM-116-AMOC-REQUESTS@faa.gov.

(i) 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.

(ii) AMOCs approved previously for AD 2015-17-14 are approved as AMOCs for the corresponding provisions of EASA AD 2018-0233R1 that are required by paragraph (g) of this AD.

(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, International Section, Transport Standards Branch, FAA; or EASA; or Airbus SAS's EASA 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 2018-0233R1 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.

**(j) Related Information**

(1) For information about EASA AD 2018-0233R1, contact EASA, Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer 3, 50668 Cologne, Germany; telephone +49 221 89990 6017; email [ADs@easa.europa.eu](mailto:ADs@easa.europa.eu); Internet [www.easa.europa.eu](http://www.easa.europa.eu). You may find this EASA AD on the EASA website at <https://ad.easa.europa.eu>. You may view this EASA AD at the

FAA, Transport Standards Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 206-231-3195. EASA AD 2018-0233R1 may be found in the AD docket on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2019-0250.

(2) For more information about this AD, contact Sanjay Ralhan, Aerospace Engineer, International Section, Transport Standards Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; telephone and fax 206-231-3223.

Issued in Des Moines, Washington, on April 10, 2019.

Michael Kaszycki,  
Acting Director,  
System Oversight Division,  
Aircraft Certification Service.  
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