

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 detect cracks in the cockpit door hinge tenons (hinge tenons) due to unintended loading of the improperly shimmed tenons caused by closing the door, which may lead to separation of the door from the helicopter, impact with the main rotor or tail rotor system, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter, accomplish the following:

(a) Within 50 hours time-in-service (TIS), inspect the thickness of the shim washers and perform the following in accordance with Eurocopter Service Bulletin No. 01.00.50, dated August 5, 1997:

(1) If the washers are equal to or less than 3 mm thick, perform the requirements of paragraph 2.B.1.1. and 2.B.2.

(2) If the washers are more than 3 mm thick and equal to or less than 3.5 mm thick, perform the requirement of paragraph 2.B.1.2. and 2.B.2.

(3) If the washers are more than 3.5 mm thick, perform a dye penetrant inspection for cracks on the hinge tenon as specified in paragraph 2.B.1.3.

(i) If a crack is found, before further flight, install an airworthy, zero hours TIS hinge tenon in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 2.B.1.3. and 2.B.2.

(ii) If the hinge tenon is determined to be airworthy and is reinstalled, remove and replace the reinstalled hinge tenon with an airworthy, zero hours TIS hinge tenon within 500 hours TIS, in accordance with paragraph 2.B.1.3. and 2.B.2.

(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, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA. Operators shall submit their requests through an FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may concur or comment and then send it to the Manager, Rotorcraft Standards Staff.

Note 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Rotorcraft Standards Staff.

(c) Special flight permits may be issued in accordance with sections 21.197 and 21.199 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.197 and 21.199) to operate the helicopter to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

(d) The inspections and replacement shall be done in accordance with Eurocopter Service Bulletin No. 01.00.50, dated August 5, 1997. This incorporation by reference was approved by the Director of the Federal Register in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a)

and 1 CFR part 51. Copies may be obtained from American Eurocopter Corporation, 2701 Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, Texas 75053-4005, telephone (972) 641-3460, fax (972) 641-3527. Copies may be inspected at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

(e) This amendment becomes effective on April 6, 1998.

Note 3: The subject of this AD is addressed in Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile (France) AD 97-108-006(AB)R1 and AD 97-109-061(AB)R1, both dated August 27, 1997.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on March 12, 1998.

Eric Bries,

*Acting Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate,
Aircraft Certification Service.*

[FR Doc. 98-7230 Filed 3-19-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-U

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97-SW-51-AD; Amendment 39-10415; AD 98-06-36]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Model SA341G and SA342J Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to Eurocopter France Model SA341G and SA342J helicopters. This action requires inspecting the tail gearbox support tripod (support tripod) for cracks. This amendment is prompted by reports of cracks that were discovered during routine maintenance inspections. The actions specified in this AD are intended to detect cracks at the welds of the tail gearbox support tripod, which could cause failure of one or more of the tripod arms, subsequent separation of the tail gearbox, and loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Effective April 6, 1998.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of April 6, 1998.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before May 19, 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-51-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

The service information referenced in this AD may be obtained from American Eurocopter Corporation, 2701 Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, Texas 75053-4005, telephone (972) 641-3460, fax (972) 641-3527. This information may be examined at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Shep Blackman, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Fort Worth, Texas 76137, telephone (817) 222-5296, fax (817) 222-5961.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, recently notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on Eurocopter France Model SA341G and SA342J helicopters. The DGAC advises that cracks have been found in the welds of the support tripod, part number 341A23-1136-00-01, or -02, and is mandating a visual inspection, and if the results of the visual inspection are inconclusive, a dye-penetrant inspection for cracks.

Eurocopter France has issued Eurocopter SA 341/342 Service Bulletin No. 05.32, dated July 17, 1997, which specifies visual inspections, and if there is any doubt about the results of the visual inspection, a dye-penetrant inspection, for cracks on the support tripod and replacement with an airworthy support tripod if a crack is found. The DGAC classified this service bulletin as mandatory and issued AD 97-144-038(B), dated July 2, 1997, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters in France.

This helicopter model is manufactured in France and is type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of § 21.29 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.29) and the applicable bilateral airworthiness agreement. Pursuant to this bilateral airworthiness agreement, the DGAC has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above. The FAA has examined the findings of the DGAC, reviewed all available information, and determined that AD action is necessary for products of this

type design that are certificated for operation in the United States.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other Eurocopter France Model SA341G and SA342J helicopters of the same type design registered in the United States, this AD is being issued to detect cracks at the welds of the tail gearbox support tripod, which could cause failure of one or more of the tripod arms, separation of the tail gearbox and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter. This AD requires, before further flight, and thereafter, prior to the first flight of each day, or at intervals not to exceed 10 hours time-in-service, whichever occurs first, visual inspections of the support tripod for cracks. If the visual inspections indicate potential cracks, a dye-penetrant inspection is required. If a crack is found, replacing the support tripod with an airworthy support tripod is required. The actions are required to be accomplished in accordance with the service bulletin described previously.

The short compliance time involved is required because the previously described critical unsafe condition can adversely affect the controllability of the helicopter. Therefore, the inspections for cracks are required prior to further flight, and this AD must be issued immediately.

The FAA estimates that 24 helicopters of U.S. registry would be affected by this AD, that it would take approximately one-half work hour to conduct the visual inspection and 9 work hours to replace the support tripod, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Required parts would cost approximately \$203,304. Based on these figures, the total cost impact of this AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$4,892,976, if the support tripod is replaced in all of the U.S. fleet.

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-51-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, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

Adoption of the Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation 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 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

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

AD 98-06-36 Eurocopter France:

Amendment 39-10415. Docket No. 97-SW-51-AD.

Applicability: Eurocopter France Model SA341G and SA342J helicopters, with tail gearbox support tripods, part number (P/N) 341A23-1136-00, -01 or -02, 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 (d) 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 detect cracks at the welds of the tail gearbox support tripod, which could cause failure of one or more of the tripod arms, separation of the tail gearbox, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter, accomplish the following:

(a) Before further flight, visually inspect the tail gearbox support tripod (support tripod), P/N 341A23-1136-00, -01 or -02, for cracks in accordance with the Accomplishment Instructions, paragraph 2(B)(1), of Eurocopter SA 341/342 Service Bulletin No. 05.32, dated July 17, 1997; thereafter, conduct this visual inspection prior to the first flight of each day, or at intervals not to exceed 10 hours time-in-service (TIS), whichever occurs first.

(1) If there is any doubt as to whether there is a crack present, perform a dye-penetrant inspection in accordance with paragraph (2)(B)(1) of the service bulletin.

(2) If a crack is found, replace the support tripod with an airworthy support tripod.

Note 2: The FAA has requested the DGAC to contact the type certificate holder and solicit terminating action that would eliminate the recurring inspection requirement of this AD.

(b) Remove from service any support tripod, P/N 341A23-1136-00, -01, or -02, which has accumulated 9,000 or more hours TIS, and replace it with an airworthy support tripod.

(c) This AD revises the Limitation section of the maintenance manual by establishing a new retirement life for the support tripod, P/N 341A23-1136-00, -01, and -02, of 9,000 hours TIS.

(d) 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, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA. Operators shall submit their requests through an FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may concur or comment and then send it to the Manager, Rotorcraft Standards Staff.

Note 3: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Rotorcraft Standards Staff.

(e) Special flight permits may be issued in accordance with sections 21.197 and 21.199 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.197 and 21.199) to operate the helicopter to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

(f) The inspections and replacement, if necessary, shall be done in accordance with Eurocopter SA 341/342 Service Bulletin No. 05.32, dated July 17, 1997. This incorporation by reference was approved by the Director of the Federal Register in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51. Copies may be obtained from American Eurocopter Corporation, 2701 Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, Texas 75053-4005, telephone (972) 641-3460, fax (972) 641-3527. Copies may be inspected at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

(g) This amendment becomes effective on April 6, 1998.

Note 4: The subject of this AD is addressed in Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile (France) AD 97-144-038(B), dated July 2, 1997.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on March 12, 1998.

Eric Bries,

*Acting Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate,
Aircraft Certification Service.*

[FR Doc. 98-7247 Filed 3-19-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97-SW-31-AD; Amendment 39-10414; AD 98-06-35]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Eurocopter France Model SA-366G1 Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to Eurocopter France Model SA-366G1 helicopters. This action requires initial and repetitive inspections of the tail rotor blade Kevlar tie-bar (Kevlar tie-bar) for delaminations. This amendment is prompted by a report of delamination of a Kevlar tie-bar. The actions specified in this AD are intended to detect delaminations of the Kevlar tie-bar, that could result in loss of anti-torque function and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Effective April 6, 1998.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of April 6, 1998.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before May 19, 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-31-AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

The service information referenced in this AD may be obtained from American Eurocopter Corporation, 2701 Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, Texas 75053-4005, telephone (972) 641-3460, fax (972) 641-3527. This information may be examined at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Mike Mathias, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Fort Worth, Texas 76137, telephone (817) 222-5123, fax (817) 222-5961.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Direction Generale De L'Aviation Civile

(DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, recently notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on Model SA-366G1 helicopters. The DGAC advises that delamination outside certain tolerance limits may occur on Kevlar tie-bars.

Eurocopter France has issued Eurocopter France Telex Service Bulletin No. 05.19, dated August 19, 1992, which specifies visually checking the condition of the Kevlar tie-bar assembly for delamination around the blade-to-hub attachment point within 10 flying hours, and if delamination exists that is outside certain tolerance limits, removing the tail rotor blade and replacing it with an airworthy blade. Eurocopter France also issued Eurocopter France SA 366 Service Bulletin No. 05.20, Revision 3, dated November 14, 1996, which specifies repetitive visual inspections of the Kevlar tie-bar for delamination, and if delamination exists that is outside certain tolerance limits, removing the tail rotor blade and replacing it with an airworthy tail rotor blade at intervals of 250 flying hours. The DGAC classified these service bulletins as mandatory and issued DGAC AD 92-186-014(B)R4, dated December 4, 1996, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters in France.

This helicopter model is manufactured in France and is type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of section 21.29 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.29) and the applicable bilateral airworthiness agreement. Pursuant to this bilateral airworthiness agreement, the DGAC has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above. The FAA has examined the findings of the DGAC, reviewed all available information, and determined that AD action is necessary for products of this type design that are certificated for operation in the United States.

The FAA estimates that 91 helicopters of U.S. registry will be affected by this AD, that it will take 4 work hours per helicopter to accomplish the actions, and that the average labor rate is \$60 per work hour. Required parts will cost approximately \$3,000 per helicopter. Based on these figures, the total cost impact of this AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$294,840.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other Eurocopter France Model SA-366G1 helicopters of the same type design registered in the United States, this AD is being issued to detect delaminations of the Kevlar tie-bar, that could result in loss of anti-