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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2012-0295; Directorate Identifier 2011-NM-057-AD; Amendment 39-16993; AD 2012-06-12]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes

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 all Airbus Model A340-600 series airplanes. This AD requires a detailed inspection for abnormalities of the ball lock retainer on the off-wing ramp slides; for closure of the soft cover; for full engagement of the slide release pin; for broken, missing, and improper placement of the safety tie thread on the slide release pin; and for proper functioning of the vent valve; and replacement of the off-wing ramp slides if necessary. This AD was prompted by reports of in-flight loss of the blow-out panel and the slide unit from a right-hand off-wing ramp-slide. We are issuing this AD to detect and correct abnormalities of the ball lock retainer, if the soft cover is open, if the slide pin release is not engaged or the safety tie thread is missing, broken, or improperly placed and the vent valve is not functioning properly, which could result in in-flight loss of the off-wing ramp slide.

DATES: This AD becomes effective April 16, 2012.

The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of a certain publication listed in the AD as of April 16, 2012.

We must receive comments on this AD by May 14, 2012.

ADDRESSES: You may send comments 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, 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>; or in person at the Docket Operations office between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The AD docket contains this AD, the regulatory evaluation, any comments received, and other information. The street address for the Docket Operations office (telephone (800) 647-5527) is in the ADDRESSES section. Comments will be available in the AD docket shortly after receipt.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Vladimir Ulyanov, Aerospace Engineer, International Branch, ANM-116, Transport Airplane Directorate, FAA 1601 Lind Avenue SW., Renton, Washington 98057-3356; telephone (425) 227-1138; fax (425) 227-1149.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Discussion

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Community, has issued EASA Airworthiness Directive 2011-0017, dated February 3, 2011 (referred to after this as "the MCAI"), to correct an unsafe condition for the specified products. The MCAI states:

An A340-600 operator has reported an in-flight loss of the blow-out panel and the slide unit from a Right Hand (RH) off-wing ramp-slide.

Investigation has revealed that the two main contributor factors of a potential in-flight loss of the slide are the packboard soft covers not fully closed and the vent valve not activated.

In flight, the air contained in the inflatable assembly could increase in volume due to air pressure changes. Consequently, pack growth could occur and apply loads on the packboard soft covers and the blow-out panel attachment hardware. To prevent a pack growth, a vent valve is installed and when activated can balance pressure inside the inflatable assembly with the ambient air pressure.

Analysis indicates that non activation of the vent valve, followed by soft cover opening, could cause the packboard blow-out panel to separate from the slide enclosure, resulting in in-flight loss of the off-wing ramp slide, which would constitute an unsafe condition.

For the reasons described above, this AD requires a one-time inspection [check] of the soft cover condition and check of the vent valve function on each off-wing ramp slide, and accomplishment of the applicable corrective actions [replacement of the off-wing ramp slide].

The one-time inspection consists of a detailed inspection for abnormalities of the ball lock retainer on the off-wing ramp slides; for closure of the soft cover; for full engagement of the slide release pin; for broken, missing, and improper placement of the safety tie thread on the slide release pin; and for proper functioning of the vent valve. You may obtain further information by examining the MCAI in the AD docket.

Relevant Service Information

Airbus has issued All Operators Telex A340-25A5191, dated January 18, 2011. The actions described in this service information are intended to correct the unsafe condition identified in the MCAI.

FAA's Determination and Requirements of This 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 and service information referenced above. We are issuing this AD because we evaluated all pertinent information and determined the unsafe condition exists and is likely to exist or develop on other products of the same type design.

There are no products of this type currently registered in the United States. However, this rule is necessary to ensure that the described unsafe condition is addressed if any of these products are placed on the U.S. Register in the future.

FAA's Determination of the Effective Date

Since there are currently no domestic operators of this product, notice and opportunity for public comment before issuing this AD are unnecessary.

Comments Invited

This AD is a final rule that involves requirements affecting flight safety, and we did not precede it by notice and opportunity for public comment. We invite you to send any written relevant data, views, or arguments about this AD. Send your comments to an address listed under the ADDRESSES section. Include "Docket No. FAA-2012-0295; Directorate Identifier 2011-NM-057-AD" at the beginning of your comments. We specifically invite comments on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of this AD. We will consider all comments received by the closing date and may amend this AD because of 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 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.

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 above, I certify this AD:

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); and
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.

We prepared a regulatory 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 AD:



2012-06-12 Airbus: Amendment 39-16993. Docket No. FAA-2012-0295; Directorate Identifier 2011-NM-057-AD.

(a) Effective Date

This airworthiness directive (AD) becomes effective April 16, 2012.

(b) Affected ADs

None.

(c) Applicability

This AD applies to Airbus Model A340-642 airplanes, certificated in any category, all manufacturer serial numbers.

(d) Subject

Air Transport Association (ATA) of America Code 25: Equipment/Furnishings.

(e) Reason

This AD was prompted by reports of in-flight loss of the blow-out panel and the slide unit from a right-hand off-wing ramp-slide. We are issuing this AD to detect and correct abnormalities of the ball lock retainer, if the soft cover is open, if the slide pin release is not engaged or the safety tie thread is missing or broken, and the vent valve is not functioning properly, which could result in in-flight loss of the off-wing ramp slide.

(f) Compliance

You are responsible for having the actions required by this AD performed within the compliance times specified, unless the actions have already been done.

(g) Actions

Within 90 days after the effective date of this AD, do a detailed inspection for abnormalities of the ball lock retainer on the off-wing ramp slides; for closure of the soft cover; for full engagement of the slide release pin; for broken, missing, and improper placement of the safety tie thread on the slide release pin; and for proper function of the vent valve; in accordance with Airbus All Operators Telex (AOT) A340-25A5191, dated January 18, 2011. If the ball lock retainer has abnormalities, the soft cover is open, or the slide pin release is not engaged, or the safety tie thread is broken, missing, or improperly placed, or the vent valve is not functioning properly, before further flight, replace the off-wing ramp slide, in accordance with Airbus AOT A340-25A5191, dated January 18, 2011.

(h) Parts Installation

As of the effective date of this AD, no person may install any off-wing ramp slide having part number 4A3931-X on any airplane, unless the check required by paragraph (g) of this AD has been done and none of the conditions specified in paragraph (g) of this AD are found.

(i) Other FAA AD Provisions

The following provisions also apply to this AD:

(1) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs): The Manager, International 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 Branch, send it to ATTN: Vladimir Ulyanov, Aerospace Engineer, International Branch, ANM-116, Transport Airplane Directorate, FAA, 1601 Lind Avenue SW., Renton, Washington 98057-3356; telephone (425) 227-1138; fax (425) 227-1149. Information may be emailed to: 9-ANM-116-AMOC-REQUESTS@faa.gov. 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. The AMOC approval letter must specifically reference this AD.

(2) Airworthy Product: For any requirement in this AD to obtain corrective actions from a manufacturer or other source, use these actions if they are FAA-approved. Corrective actions are considered FAA-approved if they are approved by the State of Design Authority (or their delegated agent). You are required to assure the product is airworthy before it is returned to service.

(j) Related Information

Refer to Mandatory Continuing Airworthiness Information (MCAI) European Aviation Safety Airworthiness Directive 2011-0017, dated February 3, 2011; and Airbus AOT A340-25A5191, dated January 18, 2011; for related information.

(k) Material Incorporated by Reference

(1) You must use the following service information to do the actions required by this AD, unless the AD specifies otherwise. The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference (IBR) of the following service information under 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51:

(i) Airbus All Operators Telex A340-25A5191, dated January 18, 2011. The document number and date are identified only on the first page of the document.

(2) For service information identified in this AD, contact Airbus SAS–Airworthiness Office–EAL, 1 Rond Point Maurice Bellonte, 31707 Blagnac Cedex, France; telephone +33 5 61 93 36 96; fax +33 5 61 93 45 80; email airworthiness.A330-A340@airbus.com; Internet <http://www.airbus.com>.

(3) You may review copies of the service information at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue SW., Renton, Washington. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 425-227-1221.

(4) You may also review copies of the service information that is incorporated by reference at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For information on the availability of this material at NARA, call 202-741-6030, or go to: http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/code_of_federal_regulations/ibr_locations.html.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on March 9, 2012.
Ali Bahrami,
Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate,
Aircraft Certification Service.