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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2015-7205; Directorate Identifier 2015-CE-025-AD; Amendment 39-18419; AD 2016-05-01]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Piper Aircraft, Inc. Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: We are superseding Airworthiness Directive (AD) 96-12-12, which applies to certain Piper Aircraft, Inc. Models PA-31, PA-31-300, PA-31-325, and PA-31-350 airplanes. AD 96-12-12 requires a one-time inspection of the bulkhead assembly at fuselage station (FS) 317.75 for cracks and the installation of one of two reinforcement kits determined by whether cracks were found during the inspection. This new AD requires repetitive inspections of the bulkhead assembly at FS 317.75 for cracks, repair of cracks as necessary, and the installation of a reinforcement modification. This AD was prompted by cracks found in the FS 317.75 upper bulkhead. We are issuing this AD to correct the unsafe condition on these products.

DATES: This AD is effective April 15, 2016.

The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of a certain publication listed in this AD as of April 15, 2016.

ADDRESSES: For service information identified in this final rule, contact Piper Aircraft, Inc. 2926 Piper Drive, Vero Beach, FL 32960; telephone: (415) 330-9500; email: sales@atp.com; and Internet: <http://www.piper.com/technical-publications/>. You may view this referenced service information at the FAA, Small Airplane Directorate, 901 Locust, Kansas City, Missouri 64106. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call (816) 329-4148. It is also available on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2015-7205.

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-2015-7205; or in person at the Docket Management Facility 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 address for the Docket Office (phone: 800-647-5527) is Document Management Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gregory "Keith" Noles, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Atlanta Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), 1701 Columbia Avenue, College Park, Georgia 30337; phone: (404) 474-5551; fax: (404) 474-5606; email: gregory.noles@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Discussion

We issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to amend 14 CFR part 39 to supersede AD 96-12-12, Amendment 39-9654 (61 FR 28732, June 6, 1996) ("AD 96-12-12"). AD 96-12-12 applied to certain Piper Aircraft, Inc. Models PA-31, PA-31-300, PA-31-325, and PA-31-350 airplanes. The NPRM published in the Federal Register on December 9, 2015 (80 FR 76398). The NPRM was prompted by cracks found in the fuselage station (FS) 317.75 upper bulkhead, which could cause structural failure of the vertical fin forward spar and lead to loss of control. The NPRM proposed to require repetitive inspections of the bulkhead assembly at FS 317.75 for cracks, repair of cracks as necessary, and the installation of a reinforcement modification to prevent cracks from developing. We are issuing this AD to correct the unsafe condition on these products.

Comments

We gave the public the opportunity to participate in developing this AD. The following presents the comment received on the NPRM (80 FR 76398, December 9, 2015) and the FAA's response to the comment.

Request

Erin Talbott of Hageland Aviation Service commented that the estimated labor of 8 work-hours to install the reinforcement modification was incorrect. The commenter's company installed the modification on 3 of their airplanes, and the correct estimated work-hours for installation of the reinforcement modification was 32 work-hours.

We infer from the comment that the commenter requests we change the number of work-hours to more accurately state the estimated labor cost.

The FAA agrees with this comment, and we have revised the estimated Cost of Compliance section to reflect this change.

Conclusion

We reviewed the relevant data, considered the comment received, and determined that air safety and the public interest require adopting this AD as proposed except for minor editorial changes. We have determined that these minor changes:

- Are consistent with the intent that was proposed in the NPRM (80 FR 76398, December 9, 2015) for correcting the unsafe condition; and
- Do not add any additional burden upon the public than was already proposed in the NPRM (80 FR 76398, December 9, 2015).

Related Service Information Under 1 CFR Part 51

We reviewed Piper Aircraft, Inc. Service Bulletin No. 1273A, dated October 22, 2015. The service bulletin describes procedures for inspecting the bulkhead assembly at FS 317.75, repairing any cracks found, and installation of a reinforcement modification to prevent cracks from developing. This service information 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 of this final rule.

Costs of Compliance

We estimate that this AD affects 977 airplanes of U.S. registry.

We estimate the following costs to comply with this AD:

Estimated Costs

Action	Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product	Cost on U.S. operators
Inspection of the bulkhead assembly	2 work-hours \times \$85 per hour = \$170	Not applicable	\$170	\$166,090
Repair/reinforcement of bulkhead assembly	32 work-hours \times \$85 per hour = \$2,720	500	3,220	3,145,940

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 have 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 that this AD:

- (1) Is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866,
- (2) Is not a "significant rule" under 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.

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 removing Airworthiness Directive (AD) 96-12-12, Amendment 39-9654 (61 FR 28732, June 6, 1996), and adding the following new AD:



2016-05-01 Piper Aircraft, Inc.: Amendment 39-18419; Docket No. FAA-2015-7205; Directorate Identifier 2015-CE-025-AD.

(a) Effective Date

This AD is effective April 15, 2016.

(b) Affected ADs

This AD replaces 96-12-12, Amendment 39-9654 (61 FR 28732, June 6, 1996) ("AD 96-12-12").

(c) Applicability

This AD applies to the following Piper Aircraft, Inc. airplanes listed in paragraphs (c)(1) and (c)(2) of this AD, certificated in any category:

(1) Models PA-31, PA-31-300, and PA-31-325: Serial numbers 31-2 through 31-900 and 31-7300901 through 31-8312019; and

(2) Model PA-31-350: Serial numbers 31-5001 through 31-5004 and 31-7305005 through 31-8553002.

Note 1 to paragraph (c)(1) of this AD: The Model PA-31 may also be identified as a PA-31-310, even though the PA-31-310 is not a model recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on the type certificate data sheet.

(d) Subject

Joint Aircraft System Component (JASC)/Air Transport Association (ATA) of America Code 53, Fuselage.

(e) Unsafe Condition

This AD was prompted by bulkhead cracks found on airplanes that had complied with AD 96-12-12 and on additional airplanes not affected by AD 96-12-12. We are issuing this AD to prevent structural failure of the vertical fin forward spar caused by cracks in the fuselage station (FS) at 317.75 upper bulkhead, which could lead to loss of control.

(f) Compliance

Comply with this AD within the compliance times specified, unless already done.

(g) Inspection/Repair

(1) Before or upon accumulating 2,000 hours time-in-service (TIS) or within the next 100 hours TIS after April 15, 2016 (the effective date of this AD), whichever occurs later, and repetitively thereafter at intervals not to exceed 100 hours TIS, inspect the bulkhead assembly at FS 317.75 for

cracks following Part I of the Instructions in Piper Aircraft, Inc. Service Bulletin No. 1273A, dated October 22, 2015.

(2) If any cracks are found during the inspection required in paragraph (g)(1) of this AD, before further flight, repair the cracks and install the reinforcement modification following Part I of the Instructions in Piper Aircraft, Inc. Service Bulletin No. 1273A, dated October 22, 2015. This repair/modification terminates the requirements for the repetitive inspections required in paragraph (g)(1) of this AD.

(3) You may do the modification required in paragraph (h) of this AD to terminate the repetitive inspections required in paragraph (g)(1) of this AD.

(h) Modification

Unless already done as a repair for cracks found in the inspection required in paragraph (g)(1) of this AD, before or upon accumulating 2,500 hours TIS or within the next 500 hours after April 15, 2016 (the effective date of this AD), whichever occurs later, install the reinforcement modification following Part II of the Instructions in Piper Aircraft, Inc. Service Bulletin No. 1273A, dated October 22, 2015. This modification terminates the repetitive inspections required in paragraph (g)(1) of this AD.

(i) Credit for Actions Accomplished in Accordance With Previous Service Information

This AD allows credit for the inspection required in paragraph (g)(1) of this AD and the repair required in paragraph (g)(2) of this AD, if done before April 15, 2016 (the effective date of this AD), following Part I of the Instructions in Piper Aircraft, Inc. Service Bulletin No. 1273, dated June 4, 2015. This AD also allows credit for the modification required in paragraph (h) of this AD, if done before April 15, 2016 (the effective date of this AD), following Part II of the Instructions in Piper Aircraft, Inc. Service Bulletin No. 1273, dated June 4, 2015.

(j) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, Atlanta Aircraft Certification Office (ACO), 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 manager of the ACO, send it to the attention of the person identified in Related Information, paragraph (j)(1) of this AD.

(2) 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.

(k) Related Information

For more information about this AD, contact Gregory "Keith" Noles, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Atlanta ACO, 1701 Columbia Avenue, College Park, Georgia 30337; phone: (404) 474-5551; fax: (404) 474-5606; email: gregory.noles@faa.gov.

(l) Material Incorporated by Reference

(1) The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference (IBR) of the service information listed in this paragraph under 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51.

(2) You must use this service information as applicable to do the actions required by this AD, unless the AD specifies otherwise.

(i) Piper Aircraft, Inc. Service Bulletin No. 1273A, dated October 22, 2015.

(ii) Reserved.

(3) For Piper Aircraft, Inc. service information identified in this AD, contact Piper Aircraft, Inc. 2926 Piper Drive, Vero Beach, FL 32960; telephone: (415) 330-9500; email: sales@atp.com; and Internet: <http://www.piper.com/technical-publications/>.

(4) You may view this referenced service information at the FAA, Small Airplane Directorate, 901 Locust, Kansas City, Missouri 64106. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call (816) 329-4148.

(5) You may view this 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/cfr/ibr-locations.html>.

Issued in Kansas City, Missouri, on February 24, 2016.

Robert P. Busto,
Acting Manager, Small Airplane Directorate,
Aircraft Certification Service.