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Subject: U.S. Federal Aviation Administration Press Releases Update

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In a continuing effort to address aging aircraft issues, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has finalized a rule designed to protect most of today’s commercial planes and those designed in the future from structural damage as they age.

The new rule seeks to prevent “widespread fatigue damage” (WFD) by requiring aircraft manufacturers and certification applicants to establish a number of flight cycles or hours a plane can operate and be free from WFD without additional inspections for fatigue. Manufacturers have between 18 and 60 months to comply depending on the particular aircraft type.

Once manufacturers establish these limits, operators of affected aircraft must incorporate them into their maintenance programs within 30 to 72 months, depending on the model of aircraft. After the limit is in the maintenance program, operators cannot fly the aircraft beyond that point unless the FAA approves an extension of the limit.

“Safety is our highest priority. This rule provides a comprehensive approach to the problem of widespread fatigue in aging aircraft,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “Requiring carriers to regularly inspect their aircraft for possible fatigue is essential to ensuring the highest levels of safety.”

“We’ve addressed the problem of aging aircraft with numerous targeted regulations and 100 airworthiness directives over the years,” said FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt. “This rule is a comprehensive solution to ensure the structural safety of today’s airliners and the airplanes of tomorrow.”

An airplane’s metallic structures are stressed and can develop cracks when they experience repeated loads such as the pressurization and depressurization that happens on every flight. While airlines regularly inspect aircraft for cracks exceeding a certain size, WFD involves aircraft developing numerous tiny cracks, none of which would have raised concerns individually but which together run the risk of joining up and impairing the structural integrity of the plane.

The new regulation applies to airliners with a takeoff weight of 75,000 lbs. and heavier. It also applies to all transport designs certificated in the future.

The affected models, totaling 4,198 U.S.-registered airplanes, are listed in the rule.

The FAA is working closely with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and other national authorities to harmonize this rule with their regulations as much as possible. EASA is now developing rulemaking to address WFD, and the FAA participates in that process.

The final rule is on display today at the *Federal Register*:

http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2010-28363_PI.pdf . It will be published in the *Register* Monday, November 15 at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/>.

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