



## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Aviation Administration

#### 14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2021-0026; Project Identifier AD-2020-01164-T]

RIN 2120-AA64

**Airworthiness Directives;** The Boeing Company Airplanes

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

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

**SUMMARY:** The FAA proposes to adopt a new airworthiness directive (AD) for all The Boeing Company Model 737-100, -200, -200C, -300, -400, and -500 series airplanes.

This proposed AD was prompted by a report indicating that a crack was found on the splice angle flange that is attached to the station (STA) 540 bulkhead in the area between certain stringers. This proposed AD would require repetitive surface high frequency eddy current (HFEC) inspections at the radius of the left- and right side of the STA 540 bulkhead splice angle for any cracking and applicable on-condition actions. The FAA is proposing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products.

**DATES:** The FAA 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 <https://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: Deliver to Mail address above between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

For service information identified in this NPRM, contact Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Attention: Contractual & Data Services (C&DS), 2600 Westminister Blvd., MC 110-SK57, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5600; telephone 562-797-1717; Internet <https://www.myboeingfleet.com>. You may view this referenced service information at the FAA, Airworthiness Products Section, Operational Safety 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 on the Internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0026.

### **Examining the AD Docket**

You may examine the AD docket on the Internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0026; 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, any comments received, and other information. The street address for Docket Operations is listed above.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** George Garrido, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Section, FAA, Los Angeles ACO Branch, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, CA 90712-4137; phone: 562-627-5232; fax: 562-627-5210; email: [george.garrido@faa.gov](mailto:george.garrido@faa.gov).

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### **Comments Invited**

The FAA invites you to send any written relevant data, views, or arguments about this proposal. Send your comments to an address listed under ADDRESSES. Include “Docket No. FAA-2021-0026; Project Identifier AD-2020-01164-T” at the beginning of your comments. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the proposal, explain the reason for any recommended change, and include supporting data. The FAA will consider all comments received by the closing date and may amend the proposal because of those comments.

Except for Confidential Business Information (CBI) as described in the following paragraph, and other information as described in 14 CFR § 11.35, the FAA will post all comments received, without change, to <https://www.regulations.gov>, including any personal information you provide. The agency will also post a report summarizing each substantive verbal contact received about this proposed AD.

### **Confidential Business Information**

CBI is commercial or financial information that is both customarily and actually treated as private by its owner. Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552), CBI is exempt from public disclosure. If your comments responsive to this NPRM contain commercial or financial information that is customarily treated as private, that you actually treat as private, and that is relevant or responsive to this NPRM, it is important that you clearly designate the submitted comments as CBI. Please mark each page of your submission containing CBI as “PROPIN.” The FAA will treat such marked submissions as confidential under the FOIA, and they will not be placed in the public docket of this NPRM. Submissions containing CBI should be sent to George Garrido, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Section, FAA, Los Angeles ACO Branch, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, CA 90712-4137; phone: 562-627-5232; fax:

562-627-5210; email: george.garrido@faa.gov. Any commentary that the FAA receives which is not specifically designated as CBI will be placed in the public docket for this rulemaking.

### **Discussion**

The FAA has received a report from Boeing indicating that a crack was found on the splice angle flange that is attached to the STA 540 bulkhead in the area between stringer 21 to stringer 22. The crack was found during the accomplishment of Supplemental Structural Inspection Document (SSID) F-25A on a Model 737-300 airplane. The airplane had accumulated 80,634 flight hours and 62,768 flight cycles at the time of the crack finding. This condition, if not addressed, could result in the inability of a principal structural element to sustain limit load and could adversely affect the structural integrity of the airplane; in addition, such cracking could lead to adjoining parts cracking and a potential fuel leak and consequent fire.

### **Related Service Information under 1 CFR Part 51**

The FAA reviewed Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020. The service information describes procedures for repetitive surface HFEC inspections at the radius of the left- and right side of the STA 540 bulkhead splice angle for any cracking and applicable on-condition actions. On-condition actions include repair or replacement.

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.

### **Explanation of Applicability**

Model 737 airplanes having line numbers 1 through 291 have a limit of validity (LOV) of 34,000 total flight cycles, and the actions proposed in this NPRM, as specified in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020, would be

required at a compliance time occurring after that LOV. Although operation of an airplane beyond its LOV is prohibited by 14 CFR 121.1115 and 129.115, this NPRM would include those airplanes in the applicability so that these airplanes are tracked in the event the LOV is extended in the future.

### **FAA's Determination**

The FAA is proposing this AD because the agency evaluated all the relevant information and determined the unsafe condition described previously is likely to exist or develop in other products of the same type design.

### **Proposed AD Requirements**

This proposed AD would require accomplishment of the actions identified in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020, described previously, except for any differences identified as exceptions in the regulatory text of this proposed AD.

For information on the procedures and compliance times, see this service information at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2021-0026.

### **Explanation of Requirements Bulletin**

The FAA worked in conjunction with industry, under the Airworthiness Directive Implementation Aviation Rulemaking Committee (AD ARC), to enhance the AD system. One enhancement is a process for annotating which steps in the service information are “required for compliance” (RC) with an AD. Boeing has implemented this RC concept into Boeing service bulletins.

In an effort to further improve the quality of ADs and AD-related Boeing service information, a joint process improvement initiative was worked between the FAA and Boeing. The initiative resulted in the development of a new process in which the service information more clearly identifies the actions needed to address the unsafe condition in

the “Accomplishment Instructions.” The new process results in a Boeing Requirements Bulletin, which contains only the actions needed to address the unsafe condition (i.e., only the RC actions).

**Costs of Compliance**

The FAA estimates that this proposed AD affects 117 airplanes of U.S. registry. The FAA estimates 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>
Repetitive surface HFEC inspections	7 work-hour X \$85 per hour = \$595 per inspection cycle	\$0	\$595 per inspection cycle	\$69,615 per inspection cycle

The FAA estimates the following costs to do any necessary on-condition actions that would be required. The FAA has no way of determining the number of aircraft that might need these on-condition actions:

**Estimated costs of on-condition actions**

<b>Labor cost</b>	<b>Parts cost</b>	<b>Cost per product</b>
Up to 53 work-hour X \$85 per hour = Up to \$4,505 (replacement)	Up to \$1,000	Up to \$5,505

The FAA has received no definitive data on which to base the cost estimates for the on-condition repair 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.

The FAA is 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**

The FAA 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) Would not affect intrastate aviation in Alaska, and
- (3) Would 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 adding the following new airworthiness directive:

**The Boeing Company:** Docket No. FAA-2021-0026 Project Identifier AD-2020-01164-

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**(a) Comments Due Date**

The FAA must receive comments on this airworthiness directive (AD) action by [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

**(b) Affected ADs**

None.

**(c) Applicability**

This AD applies to all The Boeing Company Model 737-100, -200, -200C, -300, -400, and -500 series airplanes, certificated in any category.

**(d) Subject**

Air Transport Association (ATA) of America Code 57, Wings.

**(e) Unsafe Condition**

This AD was prompted by a report indicating that a crack was found on the splice angle flange that is attached to the station (STA) 540 bulkhead in the area between stringer 21 to stringer 22. The FAA is issuing this AD to address any cracking in the splice angle, which could result in the inability of a principal structural element to sustain limit load and could adversely affect the structural integrity of the airplane; in addition, such cracking could lead to adjoining parts cracking and a potential fuel leak and consequent fire.

**(f) Compliance**

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

**(g) Required Actions**

(1) For airplanes identified as Group 1 in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020: Within 120 days after the effective date of this

AD, inspect the airplane and do all applicable on-condition actions using a method approved in accordance with the procedures specified in paragraph (i) of this AD.

(2) For airplanes identified as Group 2 in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020: Except as specified by paragraph (h) of this AD, at the applicable times specified in the “Compliance” paragraph of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020, do all applicable actions identified in, and in accordance with, the Accomplishment Instructions of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020.

Note 1 to paragraph (g): Guidance for accomplishing the actions required by this AD can be found in Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-57A1347, dated July 29, 2020, which is referred to in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020.

**(h) Exceptions to Service Information Specifications**

(1) Where Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020, uses the phrase “the original issue date of Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB,” this AD requires using “the effective date of this AD.”

(2) Where Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-57A1347 RB, dated July 29, 2020, specifies contacting Boeing for repair instructions: This AD requires doing the repair using a method approved in accordance with the procedures specified in paragraph (i) of this AD.

**(i) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)**

(1) The Manager, Los Angeles ACO 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 responsible Flight Standards Office, as appropriate. If sending information directly to the manager of the certification office, send it to the attention of the person identified in

paragraph (j)(1) of this AD. Information may be emailed to: 9-ANM-LAACO-AMOC-Requests@faa.gov.

(2) Before using any approved AMOC, notify your appropriate principal inspector, or lacking a principal inspector, the manager of the responsible Flight Standards Office.

(3) An AMOC that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used for any repair, modification, or alteration required by this AD if it is approved by The Boeing Company Organization Designation Authorization (ODA) that has been authorized by the Manager, Los Angeles ACO Branch, FAA, to make those findings. To be approved, the repair method, modification deviation, or alteration deviation must meet the certification basis of the airplane, and the approval must specifically refer to this AD.

**(j) Related Information**

(1) For more information about this AD, contact George Garrido, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Section, FAA, Los Angeles ACO Branch, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, CA 90712-4137; phone: 562-627-5232; fax: 562-627-5210; email: george.garrido@faa.gov.

(2) For service information identified in this AD, contact Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Attention: Contractual & Data Services (C&DS), 2600 Westminister Blvd., MC 110-SK57, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5600; telephone 562-797-1717; Internet <https://www.myboeingfleet.com>. You may view this referenced service information at the FAA, Airworthiness Products Section, Operational Safety Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 206-231-3195.

Issued on February 3, 2021.

Lance T. Gant, Director,  
Compliance & Airworthiness Division,  
Aircraft Certification Service.

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