

27 Sep 2011

Many owners are asking about the FAA approval. Here's the basic status:

1. The inoculation kits are already FAA-PMA approved and may be installed at any time by any certified mechanic to eliminate the force overload that has been compromising the spars.

2. Installing the kits has no current impact on future inspections because, at the moment, there are no future inspections required by the FAA. AD 2011-07-13 required only a one-time inspection.

3. Back in late June, the FAA requested public comment on the one-time AD for their consideration in deciding what to do next: i.e. nothing, or make the AD recurring, or issue a new revised AD, or any other action. Aerodyme responded in July with comments and proposals. I assume the FAA received other responses as well.

4. On behalf of those, like yourself, who are choosing to protect your elevators by installing the kits now, we have "hedged" against the uncertainties of what and when the FAA will mandate in the future by making it possible to accomplish the AD 2011-07-13 AMOC borescope inspection quite easily after the inoculation fittings have been installed. Thus, if the FAA were to simply make the AD recurring without, or before, granting any special considerations for those elevators that have been inoculated, the inoculated elevators could just continue to be inspected like all the rest.

5. In our proposal to the FAA, we explained that a simple visual exterior inspection of the skin / spar flange / fitting rivets should be sufficient for those elevators that have been inoculated. Technically, this would not be a terminating action, but it would make the AD so simple and quick to accomplish at each annual that the cost would drop to zero for most owners, quite like testing our Bendix ignition switches to make sure the mags cut off. Most shops include simple visual inspections and procedures like this in their basic inspection flat rate.

.... so at this point, the elevators would have been protected, and the burden of future inspections would have been reduced to minimal... but, please read on...

6. More in the interest of our collective safety than to eliminate a minimal inspection in favor of no inspection, Aerodyme will do additional testing over this winter to show (we expect) that solving the overload problem with the Aerodyme kits has not caused a new problem to pop up somewhere else. We highly doubt that any such ramifications will arise within the realm of ordinary loads and service, but I'll make the additional investment anyway, well above and beyond standard industry practice. We are planning this testing now, in coordination with the Wichita ACO, and consultations with DER Don McCosh and DER Rob Harrison, to subject one, or a few specimen elevators to sustained cyclic loading and observe for any recurrence, or new form, of structural fatigue.

Fly safe!
Jim