the FAA-approved Airplane Flight Manual (AFM) to include the following statements. This action may be accomplished by inserting a copy of this AD into the AFM.

''Selection of the flight fine pitch stop lever to ''withdrawn'' while in flight is prohibited. Such positioning may lead to loss of airplane control or may result in an overspeed condition and consequent loss of engine power.''

(b) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used if approved by the Manager, Standardization Branch, ANM–113, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate. Operators shall submit their requests through an appropriate FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may add comments and then send it to the Manager, Standardization Branch, ANM–113.

Note 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Standardization Branch, ANM–113.

(c) Special flight permits may be issued in accordance with sections 21.197 and 21.199 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.197 and 21.199) to operate the airplane to a location where the requirements of this AD can be accomplished.

(d) This amendment becomes effective on April 16, 1998.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on March 26, 1998.

Darrell M. Pederson,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 98–8540 Filed 3–31–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–U

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 97–SW–63–AD; Amendment 39–10430; AD 98–07–10]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Agusta S.p.A. Model AB 412 Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This amendment adopts a new airworthiness directive (AD) that is applicable to Agusta S.p.A. (Agusta) Model AB 412 helicopters. This action requires an inspection of the tail rotor blades for debond voids and replacement, if necessary. This amendment is prompted by the loss of a tail rotor blade tip on a tail rotor blade while the helicopter was in service. This condition, if not corrected, could result in increased vibration levels, damage to the tail rotor drive system or tail rotor assembly, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: Effective April 16, 1998.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of April 16, 1998.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before June 1, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, Attention: Rules Docket No. 97–SW–63–AD, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas 76137.

The service information referenced in this AD may be obtained from Agusta S.p.A., 21017 Cascina Costa di Samarate (VA), Via Giovanni Agusta 520, telephone (0331) 229111, fax (0331) 229605–222595. This information may be examined at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Shep Blackman, Aerospace Engineer, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Fort Worth, Texas 76137, telephone (817) 222–5296, fax (817) 222–5961.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Registro Aeronautico Italiano (RAI), which is the airworthiness authority for Italy, recently notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on Agusta Model AB 412 helicopters with tail rotor blades, part number (P/N) 212–010–750–105, serial number A5–(all numbers). The RAI advises that debond voids can result in loss of the tip cap closure block, P/N 209–010–719–3, from the blade, causing a severely out-of-balance tail rotor assembly, increased helicopter vibration levels, damage to the tail rotor drive system or tail rotor assembly, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

Agusta has issued Agusta Bollettino Tecnico (Technical Bulletin) No. 412–66, dated June 27, 1997, which specifies an inspection of the tail rotor blades for debond voids between the tip cap and blade spar/skin. The RAI classified this Technical Bulletin as mandatory and issued AD 97–194, dated July 9, 1997, in order to assure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters in Italy.

This helicopter model is manufactured in Italy and is type certificated for operation in the United States under the provisions of § 21.29 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 21.29) and the applicable bilateral airworthiness agreement. Pursuant to this bilateral airworthiness agreement, the RAI has kept the FAA informed of the situation described above. The FAA has examined the findings of the RAI, reviewed all available information, and determined that AD action is necessary for products of this type design that are certificated for operation in the United States.

This AD is being issued to prevent increased vibration levels, damage to the tail rotor drive system or tail rotor assembly, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter. This AD requires an inspection of the tail rotor blades for debond voids and replacement, if necessary. The actions are required to be accomplished in accordance with the technical bulletin described previously.

None of the Agusta Model AB 412 helicopters affected by this action are on the U.S. Register. All helicopters included in the applicability of this rule currently are operated by non-U.S. operators under foreign registry; therefore, they are not directly affected by this AD action. However, the FAA considers that this rule is necessary to ensure that the unsafe condition is addressed in the event that any of these subject helicopters are imported and placed on the U.S. Register in the future.

Should an affected helicopter be imported and placed on the U.S. register in the future, it would require approximately 1 work hour per helicopter for the inspection and 4 work hours for the replacement, if necessary, of a tail rotor blade. The average labor rate is $60 per work hour. Required blades, if needed, would cost $7,922 per blade. Based on these figures, the cost impact of this AD, should a helicopter be placed on the U.S. Register, would be $8,222 per helicopter, assuming an inspection and replacement of a tail rotor blade are accomplished.

Since this AD action does not affect any helicopter that is currently on the U.S. register, it has no adverse economic impact and imposes no additional burden on any person. Therefore, notice and public procedures hereon are unnecessary and the amendment may be made effective in less than 30 days after publication in the **Federal Register**.

Comments Invited

Although this action is in the form of a final rule that involves requirements affecting flight safety and, thus, was not preceded by notice and an opportunity for public comment, comments are

invited on this rule. Interested persons are invited to comment on this rule by submitting such written data, views, or arguments as they may desire. Communications should identify the Rules Docket number and be submitted in triplicate to the address specified under the caption **ADDRESSES.** All communications received on or before the closing date for comments will be considered, and this rule may be amended in light of the comments received. Factual information that supports the commenter's ideas and suggestions is extremely helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of the AD action and determining whether additional rulemaking action would be needed.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the rule that might suggest a need to modify the rule. All comments submitted will be available, both before and after the closing date for comments, in the Rules Docket for examination by interested persons. A report that summarizes each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this AD will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their comments submitted in response to this rule must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: ''Comments to Docket No. 97–SW–63–AD.'' The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

The regulations adopted herein will not have substantial direct effects 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. Therefore, in accordance with Executive Order 12612, it is determined that this final rule does not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

The FAA has determined that notice and prior public comment are unnecessary in promulgating this regulation and therefore, it can be issued immediately to correct an unsafe condition in aircraft since none of these model helicopters are registered in the United States, and that it is not a ''significant regulatory action'' under Executive Order 12866. It has been determined further that this action involves an emergency regulation under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979). If it is determined that this emergency regulation otherwise would be significant under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures, a final regulatory evaluation will be prepared and placed in the Rules Docket. A copy of it, if filed, may be obtained from the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption **ADDRESSES.**

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

Adoption of the Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration amends part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (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. Section 39.13 is amended by adding a new airworthiness directive to read as follows:

AD 98–07–10 Agusta S.p.A.: Amendment 39–10430. Docket No. 97–SW–63–AD.

Applicability: Agusta Model AB 412 helicopters with tail rotor blades, part number (P/N) 212–010–750–105, serial number (S/N) A5–(all numbers), installed, certificated in any category.

Note 1: This AD applies to each helicopter identified in the preceding applicability provision, regardless of whether it has been modified, altered, or repaired in the area subject to the requirements of this AD. For helicopters that have been modified, altered, or repaired so that the performance of the requirements of this AD is affected, the owner/operator must use the authority provided in paragraph (b) to request approval from the FAA. This approval may address either no action, if the current configuration eliminates the unsafe condition, or different actions necessary to address the unsafe condition described in this AD. Such a request should include an assessment of the effect of the changed configuration on the unsafe condition addressed by this AD. In no case does the presence of any modification, alteration, or repair remove any helicopter from the applicability of this AD.

Compliance: Required within 10 hours time-in-service, unless accomplished previously.

To prevent increased vibration levels, damage to the tail rotor drive system or tail rotor assembly, and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter, accomplish the following:

(a) Inspect tail rotor blades for debond voids in accordance with the Accomplishment Instructions of Agusta Bollettino Tecnico (Technical Bulletin) No. 412–66, dated June 27, 1997 (hereafter referred to as ''Technical Bulletin'').

(1) If a debond void is detected which does not exceed the limits prescribed in paragraph 3 of the Technical Bulletin, repair the tail rotor blade (blade) or replace it with an airworthy blade.

(2) If a debond void exceeds the limits prescribed in paragraph 3 of the Technical Bulletin, replace the blade with an airworthy blade.

(b) An alternative method of compliance or adjustment of the compliance time that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used if approved by the Manager, Rotorcraft Standards Staff, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA. Operators shall submit their requests through an FAA Principal Maintenance Inspector, who may concur or comment and then send it to the Manager, Rotorcraft Standards Staff.

Note 2: Information concerning the existence of approved alternative methods of compliance with this AD, if any, may be obtained from the Rotorcraft Standards Staff.

(c) Special flight permits will not be issued.

(d) The inspection shall be done in accordance with Agusta Technical Bulletin No. 412–66, dated June 27, 1997. This incorporation by reference was approved by the Director of the Federal Register in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51. Copies may be obtained from Agusta S.p.A., 21017 Cascina Costa di Samarate (VA), Via Giovanni Agusta 520, telephone (0331) 229111, fax (0331) 229605–222595. Copies may be inspected at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 2601 Meacham Blvd., Room 663, Fort Worth, Texas; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

(e) This amendment becomes effective on April 16, 1998.

Note 3: The subject of this AD is addressed in Registro Aeronautico Italiano (Italy) AD 97–194, dated July 9, 1997.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on March 24, 1998.

Eric Bries,

Acting Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 98–8464 Filed 3–31–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–U

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 96–SW–28–AD; Amendment 39–10429; AD 98–07–09]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc. Model 47B, 47B–3, 47D, 47D–1, 47G, 47G–2, 47G–2A, 47G–2A–1, 47G–3, 47G–3B, 47G–3B–1, 47G–3B–2, 47G–3B–2A, 47G–4, 47G–4A, 47G–5, 47G–5A, 47H–1, 47J, 47J–2, 47J–2A, and 47K Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.