[Federal Register, Volume 91 Number 179 (Thursday, September 17, 2026)]
[Rules and Regulations]
[Pages 58809-58812]
From the Federal Register Online via the Government Publishing Office [www.gpo.gov]
[FR Doc No: 2026-19082]

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2025-3439; Project Identifier AD-2025-00463-T; Amendment 39-23462; AD 2026-18-07]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes

AGENCY:

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION:

Final rule.

SUMMARY:

The FAA is adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for certain The Boeing Company Model 737-8, 737-9, and 737-8200 airplanes. This AD was prompted by reports indicating cracks in the bear strap and stub frame at the forward galley door cutout. This AD requires inspections for existing repairs; an inspection for any crack of the fuselage skin, bear strap, and stub frame; repetitive inspections for any crack of the bear strap and stub frame; and applicable on-condition actions. The FAA is issuing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products.

DATES:

This AD is effective October 22, 2026.

The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of a certain publication listed in this AD as of October 22, 2026.

ADDRESSES:

AD Docket: You may examine the AD docket at *regulations.gov* under Docket No. FAA-2025-3439; 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 final rule, any comments received, and other information. The address for Docket Operations is U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590.

Material Incorporated by Reference:

- For Boeing material identified in this AD, contact Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Attention: Contractual & Data Services (C&DS), 2600 Westminster Blvd., MC 110 SK57, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5600; telephone 562-797-1717; website*myboeingfleet.com*.
- You may view this material 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 at*regulations.gov* under Docket No. FAA-2025-3439.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Luis Cortez-Muniz, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone: 206-231-3958; email: *luis.a.cortez-muniz@faa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The FAA issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to amend 14 CFR part 39 by adding an AD that would apply to certain Boeing Model 737-8, 737-9, and 737-8200 airplanes. The NPRM was published in the **Federal Register** on November 25, 2025 (90 FR 53243). The NPRM was prompted by reports indicating that cracking was found in the bear strap and stub frame at the forward galley door cutout, from station (STA) 290 to STA 296 and between stringer S-8R and stringer S-9R. In the NPRM, the FAA proposed to require inspections for existing repairs; an inspection for any crack of the fuselage skin, bear strap, and stub frame; repetitive inspections for any crack of the bear strap and stub frame; and applicable on-condition actions. The FAA is issuing this AD to address any crack in the fuselage skin, bear strap, and stub frame at the forward galley door cutout from STA 290 to STA 296 and between stringer S-8R and stringer S-9R, before it reaches critical length. The unsafe condition, if not addressed, may result in the inability of a principal structural element to sustain limit load, which could adversely affect the structural integrity of the airplane.

Discussion of Final Airworthiness Directive

Comments

The FAA received comments from four commenters, including Boeing, The Foundation for Aviation Safety, Southwest Airlines (Southwest), and United Airlines (United). The following presents the comments received on the NPRM and the FAA's response to each comment.

Request To Explain How the Root Cause Is Addressed

The Foundation for Aviation Safety asked what the FAA and Boeing are doing to address the root cause of the defect. The commenter also asked if a structural defect is important enough to immediately

ground an airplane after it is detected, why is the inspection for defects not accomplished long before the proposed compliance time.

The FAA is issuing this AD to address the unsafe condition on in-service airplanes. The required compliance times for the initial inspection and on-condition repetitive inspections and repair were established to ensure any crack is detected and repaired before the crack reaches critical length with multiple opportunities for detection. The rulemaking timeline was based on Boeing 737 fleet findings, supporting analysis, and the severity of the effect on the airplane (*i.e.,* safety consequences) if cracking propagates beyond a critical length. The FAA determined that the required actions and compliance times provide an acceptable level of safety. In addition, Boeing is introducing changes to the manufacturing process that address the root cause of the unsafe condition on in-production airplanes. The FAA did not change this AD as a result of this comment.

Request To Correct Typographical Error in Requirements Bulletin

Boeing, Southwest, and United requested that flag note (a) of Figure 6 in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025, be corrected to refer to inspection of the stub frame instead of inspection of the bear strap. The commenters noted that there is a typographical error which states “bear strap” instead of “stub frame” in flag note (a) of Figure 6 and requested the FAA revise the proposed AD to add an exception to correct the error.

The FAA agrees. The FAA has added an exception in paragraph (h)(3) of this AD accordingly.

Request To Use Later Approved Revisions of Referenced Drawings

United requested to use later approved revisions of the drawings referenced in the Work Instructions, Table 1, footnote (c) of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025, without obtaining an alternative method of compliance (AMOC). United noted that the Picture Sheet Data List (PSDL) referenced in the work instructions direct operators to use Boeing PSDL 141A8370 revision C and Boeing Module Parts List (MPL) 141A8370-11. United noted that this approach restricts operators from utilizing the most current, FAA-approved revisions of the applicable PSDL and MPL data that may be effective for the aircraft configuration.

The FAA disagrees. The FAA may not refer to any document that does not yet exist in an AD. The specific drawing revisions are required as they include prescriptive instructions for the stub frame replacement when damage is found common to the stub frame. To ensure the configuration maintains an acceptable level of safety, the service information does not currently allow for later approved revisions. However, if later approved revisions of the drawings provide an acceptable level of safety, operators may request approval of an AMOC under the provisions of paragraph (i) of this AD. The FAA did not change this AD as a result of this comment.

Conclusion

The FAA reviewed the relevant data, considered any comments received, and determined that air safety requires adopting this AD as proposed. Accordingly, the FAA is issuing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products. Except for minor editorial changes, and any other changes

described previously, this AD is adopted as proposed in the NPRM. None of the changes will increase the economic burden on any operator.

Material Incorporated by Reference Under 1 CFR Part 51

The FAA reviewed Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025. This material specifies procedures for doing Option 1 or Option 2 actions as specified below, and applicable on-condition actions. On-condition actions include replacing the stub frame, doing alternative inspections, and doing a repair.

- Option 1—Perform initial external general visual inspection (GVI) of the fuselage skin and gap cover for any repair, initial internal GVI of the bear strap and stub frame for any repair, and repetitive internal high frequency eddy current (HFEC) inspections of the bear strap and stub frame for any crack.
- Option 2—Perform initial external GVI of the fuselage skin and gap cover for any repair, initial internal GVI of the stub frame for any repair, initial external HFEC inspection of the fuselage skin for any crack, initial external low frequency eddy current (LFEC) inspection of the bear strap for any crack, initial internal HFEC inspection of the stub frame for any crack, and repetitive internal HFEC inspections of the bear strap and stub frame for any crack.

This material 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.

Costs of Compliance

The FAA estimates that this AD affects 476 airplanes of U.S. registry. The FAA estimates the following costs to comply with this AD:

Estimated Costs

Action	Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product	Cost on U.S. operators
Option 1—Initial inspections	31 work-hours × $85 per hour = $2,635	$0	$2,635	$1,254,260.
Option 2—Initial inspections	7 work-hours × $85 per hour = $595	0	$595	$283,220.
Repetitive internal HFEC inspections of the bear strap and stub frame per Option 1 or Option 2	29 work-hours × $85 per hour = $2,465 per inspection cycle	0	$2,465 per inspection cycle	$1,173,340 per inspection cycle.

The FAA estimates the following costs to do any necessary replacements that would be required based on the results of the inspection. The agency has no way of determining the number of aircraft that might need this replacement:

On-Condition Costs

Action	Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product
Replace the stub frame	35 work-hours × $85 per hour = $2,975	$1,359	$4,334

The FAA has received no definitive data that would enable the agency to provide cost estimates for the on-condition repairs specified in this 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

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) Will not affect intrastate aviation in Alaska, and

(3) 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

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 adding the following new airworthiness directive:

2026-18-07 The Boeing Company: Amendment 39-23462; Docket No. FAA-2025-3439; Project Identifier AD-2025-00463-T.

(a) Effective Date

This airworthiness directive (AD) is effective October 22, 2026.

(b) Affected ADs

None.

(c) Applicability

This AD applies to The Boeing Company Model 737-8, 737-9, and 737-8200 airplanes, certificated in any category, as identified in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025.

(d) Subject

Air Transport Association (ATA) of America Code 53, Fuselage.

(e) Unsafe Condition

This AD was prompted by reports indicating cracks in the bear strap and stub frame at the forward galley door cutout, from station (STA) 290 to STA 296 and between stringer S-8R and stringer S-9R. The FAA is issuing this AD to address any crack in the fuselage skin, bear strap, and stub frame at the forward galley door cutout from STA 290 to STA 296 and between stringer S-8R and stringer S-9R, before it reaches critical length. The unsafe condition, if not addressed, may result in the inability of a principal structural element to sustain limit load, which could adversely affect the structural integrity of the airplane.

(f) Compliance

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

(g) Required Actions

Except as specified in paragraph (h) of this AD: At the applicable times specified in the "Compliance" paragraph of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025, do all applicable actions identified in, and in accordance with, the Accomplishment Instructions of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025.

Note 1 to paragraph (g): Guidance for accomplishing the actions required by this AD can be found in Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1420, dated February 13, 2025, which is referred to in Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025.

(h) Exceptions to Requirements Bulletin Specifications

(1) Where the Compliance Time columns of the tables in the "Compliance" paragraph of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025, refer to the original issue date of Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, this AD requires using the effective date of this AD.

(2) Where Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025, specifies contacting Boeing for repair instructions or for alternative inspections: This AD requires doing the repair, or doing the alternative inspections and applicable on-condition actions using a method approved in accordance with the procedures specified in paragraph (i) of this AD.

(3) Where flag note (a) of Figure 6 of the Accomplishment Instructions of Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025, specifies "Use the probe to scan internal surface of the bear strap at the specified area", this AD requires replacing that text with "Use the probe to scan the internal surface of the stub frame at the specified area".

(i) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, AIR-520, Continued Operational Safety 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 Continued Operational Safety Branch, send it to the attention of the person identified in paragraph (j)(1) of this AD. Information may be emailed to: *AMOC@faa.gov*. Before using any approved AMOC, notify your appropriate principal inspector, or lacking a principal inspector, the manager of the responsible Flight Standards Office.

(2) 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, AIR-520, Continued Operational Safety 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) Additional Information

(1) For more information about this AD, contact Luis Cortez-Muniz, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone: 206-231-3958; email: *luis.a.cortez-muniz@faa.gov*.

(2) Material identified in this AD that is not incorporated by reference is available at the address specified in paragraph (k)(3) of this AD.

(k) Material Incorporated by Reference

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

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

(i) Boeing Alert Requirements Bulletin 737-53A1420 RB, dated February 13, 2025.

(ii) [Reserved]

(3) For Boeing material identified in this AD, contact Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Attention: Contractual & Data Services (C&DS), 2600 Westminster Blvd., MC 110-SK57, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5600; telephone 562-797-1717; website *myboeingfleet.com*.

(4) You may view this material 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.

(5) You may view this material at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For information on the availability of this material at NARA, visit *www.archives.gov/federal-register/cfr/ibr-locations* or email *fr.inspection@nara.gov*.

Issued on September 2, 2026.

Brian Knaup,

Acting Deputy Director, Integrated Certificate Management Division, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 2026-19082 Filed 9-16-26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-P