

(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 October 21, 2026.

Lona C. Saccomando,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA–2026–1326; Project Identifier MCAI–2025–00312–R; Amendment 39–23498; AD 2026–21–09]

RIN 2120–AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters Deutschland GmbH (AHD) Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The FAA is adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for certain Airbus Helicopters Deutschland GmbH (AHD) Model EC135P1, EC135P2, EC135P2+, EC135P3, EC135T1, EC135T2, EC135T2+, EC135T3, EC635T2+, MBB–BK 117 C–2, and MBB–BK 117 D–2 helicopters. This AD was prompted by reports of cracks on the cable drum of the rescue hoist assembly. This AD requires repetitively inspecting the cable drum of certain rescue hoist assemblies for cracks and, depending on the results, replacing or repairing the cable drum of the rescue hoist assembly. This AD also prohibits the operation and the installation of an affected rescue hoist assembly on a helicopter, unless certain requirements are met. The FAA is issuing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products.

DATES: This AD is effective December 1, 2026.

The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of a certain publication listed in this AD as of December 1, 2026.

ADDRESSES:

AD Docket: You may examine the AD docket at regulations.gov under Docket No. FAA–2026–1326; 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, the mandatory continuing airworthiness information (MCAI), 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 European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) material identified in this AD, contact EASA, Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer 3, 50668 Cologne, Germany; phone: +49 221 8999 000; email: ADs@easa.europa.eu; website: easa.europa.eu. You may find this material on the EASA website at ad.easa.europa.eu.

- You may view this material at the FAA, Airworthiness Products Section, Operational Safety Branch, 10101 Hillwood Parkway, Fort Worth, TX 76177. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call (817) 222–5110. It is also available at regulations.gov under Docket No. FAA–2026–1326.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Steven Warwick, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, 1600 Stewart Avenue, Suite 410, Westbury, NY 11590; phone: (817) 222–5225; email: steven.r.warwick@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 AHD Model EC135P1, EC135P2, EC135P2+, EC135P3, EC135T1, EC135T2, EC135T2+, EC135T3, EC635T2+, MBB–BK 117 C–2, and MBB–BK 117 D–2 helicopters. The NPRM was published in the **Federal Register** on February 13, 2026 (91 FR 6795). The NPRM was prompted by an MCAI, issued by EASA, which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union. EASA issued EASA AD 2025–0055, dated March 11, 2025 (EASA AD 2025–0055) (also referred to as the MCAI). The MCAI states that cracks were reported on a cable drum installed on certain part-numbered Goodrich rescue hoist assemblies. Additionally, the material referenced in the MCAI states that Goodrich determined that this occurrence was isolated to a batch of cable drums made from a plate material,

which was determined to have increased susceptibility to corrosion-induced fatigue. This unsafe condition, if not addressed, could result in corrosion-induced fatigue of the cable drum, and consequent injuries to human load or individuals on the ground.

In the NPRM, the FAA proposed to require repetitively inspecting the cable drum of certain rescue hoist assemblies for cracks and depending on the results, replacing or repairing the cable drum of the rescue hoist assembly. Additionally, in the NPRM the FAA proposed to prohibit the operation and the installation of an affected rescue hoist assembly on a helicopter, unless certain requirements are met. The FAA is issuing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products.

Additionally, since the FAA issued the NPRM, it was determined that the special flight permit restriction specified in paragraph (j) of the proposed rule is no longer needed. Accordingly, the FAA has revised this final rule by removing the special flight permit paragraph.

Discussion of Final Airworthiness Directive

Comments

The FAA received comments from three commenters. The commenters were AHD, Onboard Systems Hoist and Winch, and an individual commenter. The following discussion presents the comments received on the NPRM and the FAA’s response to these comments.

Request To Clarify Affected Parts

An individual commenter requested that the FAA specify the affected part by serial number, part number, and manufacturing batches that have the highest risk. The commenter also stated that by including this information, it will avoid unnecessary repeated inspections which may delay rescue missions.

The FAA disagrees with specifying or limiting this final rule by adding the serial number, part number, or manufacturing batch information. The AD already incorporates this information by reference, and the serial numbers associated with a subset of the affected part numbers are identified in the incorporated MCAI. Additionally, manufacturing batch information is not necessary to determine the affected parts, and all of the identified part numbers present an equivalent level of risk; none represent a “highest risk” category as suggested by the commenter. The FAA did not change this AD as a result of this comment.

Request To Revise Inspection Requirements

One individual commenter requested that the FAA clarify why only visual inspections are required and not other forms of testing or inspections. The commenter stated that visual inspections may not detect small, undetectable cracks that are caused by corrosion, which may grow faster than expected. The commenter further stated that by including this information, it will help determine how often inspections must occur to ensure safe cable drums.

The FAA infers the commenter is requesting the inspection methods increase to other forms of inspections and not just visual inspections alone. The FAA disagrees with revising the inspection method outside of the requirements that were proposed in the NPRM. EASA, the State of Design authority for these helicopters, determined the appropriate inspection methodology and criteria for the required inspections. The FAA agrees with EASA. The FAA did not change this AD as a result of this comment.

Request To Revise the Inspection Requirements

AHD and Onboard Systems Hoist and Winch (Onboard Systems) both requested that the FAA revise or remove the inspection requirements of paragraphs (h)(3) and (4) of the proposed AD.

Onboard Systems requested the FAA revise paragraph (h)(3) of the proposed AD by allowing maintenance personnel a limited compliance time to confirm indications of a crack with personnel at Airbus Helicopters or Onboard Systems Hoist and Winch prior to repairs. Onboard Systems stated the inspection process was carefully considered to ensure that cracks are detected well before they pose any risk of fracture, while also preventing the removal of essential search and rescue assets from service for misidentified indications. Additionally, Onboard Systems stated that they would have the operator send detailed images of the indication and if the indication could not be identified as benign, then they would require removing the part from the helicopter. AHD stated the proposed inspection as

specified in paragraph (h)(3) of the proposed AD implies further changes to the inspection process, which could eliminate the 3mm minimum crack size criteria.

The FAA disagrees with Onboard System request to revise the compliance time to confirm indications because the FAA may prioritize immediate action upon detection of potential safety concerns, such as cracks, to eliminate any risk of fracture that could compromise safety. However, the FAA agrees to revise paragraph (h)(3) of this AD by removing the criteria for contacting the Manager, International Validation Branch, or Airbus Helicopters' Design Organizational Approval if any cracks or suspected cracks longer than 3mm in length are found.

Onboard Systems requested the FAA remove paragraph (h)(4) of the proposed AD. Onboard Systems stated if using more than 6X magnification and no minimum threshold, the risk of false indications increases exponentially. AHD requested the FAA remove paragraph (h)(4) of the proposed AD or revise by removing the words "or higher." AHD stated the use of such high magnification could increase misidentifications or surface cracks, leading to false-positive indications. AHD stated this inspection deviations could lead to false-positive indications and the unnecessary grounding of search and rescue assets.

The FAA acknowledges the commenter's concern to prevent unnecessary actions that may remove important resources essential to rescue missions and the FAA has determined that a crack length of 3 mm is too small to accurately detect with the unaided eye (1x magnification). However, the FAA agrees that a 4X–6X magnification is sufficient. Accordingly, the FAA has revised paragraph (h)(4) of this AD to specify that 4X–6X magnification is required for the visual inspection.

Conclusion

These products have been approved by the civil aviation authority of another country and are approved for operation in the United States. Pursuant to the FAA's bilateral agreement with this State of Design Authority, that authority

has notified the FAA of the unsafe condition described in the MCAI referenced above. 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 EASA AD 2025–0055, which specifies procedures for repetitively inspecting the cable drum installed on the rescue hoist assembly for cracks longer than 3 mm and, depending on the results, contacting the manufacturer for approved repair instructions. Additionally, the MCAI allows the installation of an affected rescue hoist assembly on a helicopter if it meets certain requirements. Finally, the MCAI prohibits the operation of an affected rescue hoist assembly after a certain effective date as specified in the MCAI.

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.

Differences Between This AD and the MCAI

The MCAI applies to AHD Model EC635 P2+, EC635 P3, EC635 T1, and EC635 T3 helicopters, whereas this AD does not because those models do not have an FAA type certificate.

Where the MCAI specifies to contact the manufacturer for repair instructions, this AD requires repairing an affected rescue hoist assembly in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, International Validation Branch; EASA; or Airbus Helicopters' Design Organization Approval.

Costs of Compliance

The FAA estimates that this AD affects 476 helicopters 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
Visually inspect the cable drum	1 work-hour × \$85 per hour = \$85	\$0	\$85	\$40,460

The FAA estimates the following costs to do any replacements that would be required based on the results of the

required inspection. The agency has no way of determining the number of

helicopters that might need this replacement:

ESTIMATED COSTS FOR OPTIONAL ACTION

Action	Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product
Replace rescue hoist assembly	3.5 work-hours × \$85 per hour = \$298	\$123,000	\$123,298

The FAA has no way of determining the cost to repair a rescue hoist assembly or the number of helicopters that may require either repair or replacement of the rescue hoist assembly if any cracks are found in the cable drum that are of a certain length or more.

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:

2026–21–09 Airbus Helicopters

Deutschland GmbH (AHD): Amendment 39–23498; Docket No. FAA–2026–1326; Project Identifier MCAI–2025–00312–R.

(a) Effective Date

This airworthiness directive (AD) is effective December 1, 2026.

(b) Affected ADs

None.

(c) Applicability

This AD applies to Airbus Helicopters Deutschland GmbH (AHD) Model EC135P1, EC135P2, EC135P2+, EC135P3, EC135T1, EC135T2, EC135T2+, EC135T3, and EC635T2+ helicopters, certificated in any category, all serial numbers (S/N) up to 1999; and Model MBB–BK 117 C–2 and MBB–BK 117 D–2 helicopters, certificated in any category, all S/Ns.

Note 1 to paragraph (c): Helicopters with an EC135P3H designation are Model EC135P3 helicopters. Helicopters with an EC135T3H designation are Model EC135T3 helicopters.

Note 2 to paragraph (c): Helicopters with an MBB–BK 117 C–2e designation are Model MBB–BK 117 C–2 helicopters.

(d) Subject

Joint Aircraft System Component (JASC) Code 2500, Cabin equipment/furnishings.

(e) Unsafe Condition

This AD was prompted by reports of cracks on the cable drum of the rescue hoist assembly. The FAA is issuing this AD to detect and correct cable drums installed on

certain rescue hoist assemblies that have been manufactured with a certain plate material that could result in corrosion-induced fatigue of the cable drum. This unsafe condition, if not addressed, could result in failure of the cable drum and injuries to human load or individuals on the ground.

(f) Compliance

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

(g) Requirements

Except as specified in paragraphs (h) and (i) of this AD: comply with all required actions and compliance times specified in, and in accordance with, European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD 2025–0055, dated March 11, 2025 (EASA AD 2025–0055).

(h) Exceptions to EASA AD 2025–0055

(1) Where EASA AD 2025–0055 refers to its effective date, this AD requires using the effective date of this AD.

(2) Where EASA AD 2025–0055 requires compliance in terms of flight hours, this AD requires using hours time-in-service.

(3) Where paragraph (2) of EASA AD 2025–0055 and the material referenced in EASA AD 2025–0055 specifies to contact a manufacturer for repair instructions, for this AD repair an affected rescue hoist assembly in accordance with a method approved by the Manager, International Validation Branch, FAA; EASA; or Airbus Helicopters' Design Organization Approval (DOA). If approved by the DOA, the approval must include the DOA-authorized signature.

(4) Where the material referenced in EASA AD 2025–0055 specifies "magnifying glass 6X maximum," this AD requires replacing that text with "4X–6X magnification".

(5) This AD does not adopt the "Remarks" section of EASA AD 2025–0055.

(i) No Reporting Requirement

Although the material referenced in EASA AD 2025–0055 specifies to submit certain information to the manufacturer, this AD does not require that action.

(j) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, International Validation 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 local Flight Standards District Office, as appropriate. If sending information directly to the manager of the International Validation

Branch, send it to the attention of the person identified in paragraph (k) of this AD and email to: AMOC@faa.gov.

(2) Before using any approved AMOC, notify your appropriate principal inspector, or lacking a principal inspector, the manager of the local flight standards district office/certificate holding district office.

(k) Additional Information

For more information about this AD, contact Steven Warwick, Aviation Safety Engineer, FAA, 1600 Stewart Avenue, Suite 410, Westbury, NY 11590; phone: (817) 222-5225; email: steven.r.warwick@faa.gov.

(l) 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) European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD 2025-0055, dated March 11, 2025.

(ii) [Reserved]

(3) For EASA material identified in this AD, contact EASA, Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer 3, 50668 Cologne, Germany; phone: +49 221 8999 000; email: ADs@easa.europa.eu; website: easa.europa.eu. You may find this material on the EASA website at ad.easa.europa.eu.

(4) You may view this material at the FAA, Airworthiness Products Section, Operational Safety Branch, 10101 Hillwood Parkway, Fort Worth, TX 76177. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call (817) 222-5110.

(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 October 19, 2026.

Steven W. Thompson,

Acting Deputy Director, Compliance & Airworthiness Division, Aircraft Certification Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

28 CFR Part 25

[Docket No. FBI-159; AG Order No. 7257-2026]

RIN 1110-AA35

Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022—Criteria for National Instant Criminal Background Check System (“NICS”) Background Checks of Firearm Handlers

AGENCY: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The United States Department of Justice (“Department”) is amending several of its regulations pertaining to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (“NICS” or “system”) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) to authorize Federal Firearm Licensees (“FFLs” or “licensees”) to use NICS for purposes of voluntarily conducting employment background checks relating to certain current or prospective FFL employees. This final rule describes in more detail how, upon its effective date, FFLs will be able to conduct “firearm handler background checks” (“FHCs”) of “eligible employees.”

DATES: This final rule is effective November 27, 2026.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jill A. Montgomery, Assistant Section Chief, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Justice Information Services Division, NICS Section; Telephone: (304) 625-0606 (this is not a toll-free number).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Background
- III. Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
- IV. Analysis of Comments and Department Responses
- V. Final Rule
- VI. Statutory and Executive Order Review
- VII. Disclosure
- VIII. Severability

I. Executive Summary

A. Summary of the Regulatory Action

As part of combatting firearms trafficking and straw purchasing and advancing other goals, Congress passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (“BSCA”), requiring the Attorney General, in relevant part, to promulgate regulations authorizing licensees to voluntarily use NICS as part of the licensees’ employment background checks of current or prospective FFL employees. *See* Public Law 117-159, sec. 12004, 136 Stat. 1313, 1326-1332 (2022); 34 U.S.C. 40901(b)(2). On December 12, 2024, the Department published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“NPRM”) in the **Federal Register** seeking comments on the Department’s proposed revisions to 28 CFR part 25 that, if finalized, would allow FFLs to voluntarily conduct FHCs of eligible FFL employees. *See* Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022—Criteria for National Instant Criminal Background Check System (“NICS”) Background Checks of Firearm Handlers, 89 FR 100424 (Dec. 12, 2024). With limited exceptions discussed in Section V of this rule, the amendments

to 28 CFR part 25 will be finalized as proposed in the NPRM.

B. Summary of Costs and Benefits

As proposed in the NPRM, this rule will impose little to no costs upon FFLs, eligible employees, or any State, local, or Tribal governmental entities. First, FFLs are not required by the rule to submit FHCs; FFLs may volunteer to submit FHCs. Similarly, FFLs will only incur minimal costs in terms of time and system upgrades if they opt to submit FHCs. Second, to submit an FHC, the eligible employee must have provided their informed, written consent for the background check. Agencies acting as “points of contact” (“POCs”) during NICS checks for firearm transfers will not be required to process FHCs unless they voluntarily choose to add FHC-related duties to their existing POC duties. POC duties are discussed further in Section II.A of this rule. Finally, this rule does not obligate State, local, and Tribal governmental entities to respond to FHC-related requests from the FBI or POCs.

Once effective, this rule will benefit FFLs that choose to submit FHCs by letting them know whether information available to NICS indicates the eligible employee is, or may be, prohibited from receiving or possessing firearms or ammunition. Having such information can assist FFLs in making informed determinations about whether that person should have employment duties that may involve access to firearms, ammunition, or their manufacturing components. This rule will also benefit public safety by implementing another mechanism that can keep more prohibited persons from being placed in positions that would otherwise afford them with access to firearms, ammunition, or their manufacturing components.

II. Background

A. Regulatory Context

BSCA made changes to Federal law regarding, among other things, firearms trafficking and the straw purchasing of firearms. *See* BSCA sec. 12004, 136 Stat. at 1326-1332. For instance, BSCA created new criminal offenses and increased punishments for some existing firearms-related offenses. *See id.* sec. 12004(a)(1), 136 Stat. at 1326-27 (e.g., adding 18 U.S.C. 932 and 933). BSCA also provided for a new, voluntary use of NICS, requiring the Attorney General to promulgate regulations that will allow FFLs to access NICS “for purposes of voluntarily conducting an employment background