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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: May 18, 1977

Forwarded to:

Honorable Langhorne M. Bond
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-77-32 and 33

On May 16, 1977, a Sikorsky Model S-61L helicopter operated by New York Airways was involved in an accident on the Pan American Building Heliport in New York City. The right main landing gear collapsed causing the helicopter to topple; the rotating main rotor blades contacted the heliport surface and disintegrated. Parts of the blades caused fatal injuries to persons in the vicinity waiting to embark on a flight to the John F. Kennedy Airport.

The National Transportation Safety Board is aware of two previous accidents involving failure of S-61L landing gear structure. These accidents occurred in 1962 and changes to associated parts were introduced in 1963.

The preliminary examination of the landing gear structure from the New York Airways helicopter disclosed that the gear collapsed as a result of a fatigue fracture of the forward fitting, P/N 6125-50333-2. Information shows that the part must be inspected every 9,900 hours. The failed fitting had been in service for 7,000 hours. We are not aware of any inspection requirements other than visual during the 9,900-hour period.

The Safety Board is concerned about the possibility of similar failures and we believe that immediate action is necessary to insure that the S-61L series helicopter can continue safe operation. Because of the similarity in design of the forward and aft fittings on both the right and left sides, the action should include inspection of all landing gear fittings.

Honorable Langhorne M. Bond

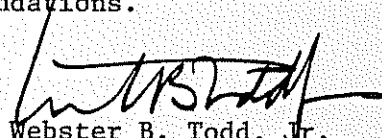
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Therefore, as transmitted to you by phone yesterday, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Issue an Airworthiness Directive to require an immediate one-time inspection by an approved method on both the forward and aft main landing gear attachment fittings, right and left, on all Sikorsky Model 61L series helicopters having similar installations. (Class I - Urgent Followup) (A-77-32)

Reevaluate the current inspection interval and issue requirements for more frequent periodic inspections if necessary to insure continued safe operation. The inspection interval could be based on a set number of operating cycles instead of an established operating time. (Class II - Priority Followup) (A-77-33)

TODD, Chairman, BAILEY, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.


By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.
Chairman