

Bell Helicopter **TEXTRON**

A Subsidiary of Textron, Inc.

April 20, 2000

INFORMATION LETTER 204-00-8

205A-00-21

205B-00-2

212-00-33

UH-1H II-00-01

TO: All Owners/Operators of Bell 204, 205A, 205B, 212, UH-1H II Helicopters.

SUBJECT: Main Rotor Mast 204-011-450-001/-007/-105/-113/-119; Inspection and Retirement Index Number (RIN) life Reduction

Reference: ASB 204-00-51, 205A-00-76, 205B-00-30, 212-00-106, UH-1H II-00-01

It has become necessary for Bell Helicopter to take conservative steps to protect the safety of Bell 204, 205, 212, and UH-1H II operators. There have been five incidents since 1991, three in which the mast fractured and two in which a mast was found cracked during inspection.

Due to the unfortunate accidents where the mast pole has separated in flight, Bell has chosen to use new criteria to count future RIN cycles on the main rotor mast. All external lifts must now be counted with a RIN penalty, whereas only logging operations were counted at a penalty previously. Since the 204-011-450 mast is used in different model helicopters with different gross weights the RIN penalty per lift differs depending on aircraft gross weight capabilities. The RIN life of the 204-011-450-001/-007/-105/ is reduced to 265,000 RIN, and the -113/-119 is reduced to 240,000 RIN.

Additionally, an inspection is required on masts serial number N9-36752 and prior in the area of the snap ring grooves. It was determined that the affected masts may have been manufactured with a sharp radius or the presence of material burrs in the snap ring groove area, which can cause high stress concentrations leading to lower RIN life.

There are approximately 1,075 affected helicopters operating commercially worldwide today. The FAA is planning to release a priority letter requiring the reduced RIN life and inspection of the affected masts.

An aggressive program of expediting replacement masts and providing a worldwide network of inspection centers has been implemented. Operators may use Bell inspection centers or the availability of local assets to meet the requirements of the inspection. The inspection can be performed on the aircraft, the aircraft can be flown to a Bell inspection center, or the mast can be shipped to an inspection center.

Operators should consider the possibility of inspected masts being rejected when deciding on the method of mast inspection. Bell anticipates that there may be a temporary surge in the requirement for replacement masts, which will strain the production capabilities of our vendor.

Although the UH-1H and UH-1N fleet of helicopters is not under control of Bell Helicopter, the configuration of the mast is identical.