Airbus Says New Cracks Found In A380 Wing

PARIS (AP) — Airbus found new cracks on metal brackets inside the wings of two A380 superjumbo jets after inspections launched following the 2010 incident in which a Qantas A380's engine disintegrated in flight, the company said Thursday.

The cracks were found "on a limited number of non-critical brackets inside the wings of some A380s," Airbus said in a statement. These "wing rib feet," as the part is known, connect the wing's ribs to its skin.

Airbus spokesman Stefan Schaffrath said the new cracks were found on two of the nine aircraft inspected so far.

Sixty-eight of the double-decker, $390 million jets are flying with seven airlines, including Dubai's Emirates, the largest A380 operator with 20 of the aircraft now flying. The jet seats 525 people in three classes.

Europe's air safety authority, the Cologne, Germany-based EASA, will issue instructions known as an air worthiness directive to airlines flying the A380 on Friday. The timing and frequency of checks that airlines will have to carry out because of the new cracks was still being discussed late Thursday, EASA spokesman Dominique Fouda said.

A different kind of crack on the same part was discovered and repaired on two of Singapore Airlines' seven A380s following inspections that followed the November, 2010 explosion of a Rolls Royce engine on a Qantas A380 flying from Singapore to Sydney.

The plane, carrying 466 people, returned to Singapore and made a safe emergency landing.

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