

EM0009: The Record, Waterloo Region, October 14, 2000, page A12

WASHINGTON

Too many screws loose on American aircraft

Associated Press

U.S. aircraft may have too many screws loose, the U.S. Transportation Department's inspector-general said.

Investigators found more than one-quarter of screws and bolts tested at random didn't meet specifications, an inspector-general's report released yesterday said. The report included no reports of accidents resulting from sub-standard parts.

"We are not seeing a problem in service," Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Eliot Brenner said.

"Airplane parts are holding together. The figure they came up with is a surprise to us," he said, noting the FAA has launched an evaluation of screw and bolt manufacturers.

A 1990 law, the Fastener Quality Act, requires screws, bolts and other fasteners used in aircraft to meet strict specifications.

In an effort to check fastener quality, inspectors from the inspector-general's office randomly collected 176 fasteners from the inventories of airlines and repair stations. The items were selected from a list of critical parts used in Boeing, Pratt & Whitney,

General Electric and Bombardier products.

These parts were sent to the Science and Engineering Laboratory at Hill Air Force Base for testing, and 48 screws and bolts – 27 per cent – were found without correct thread dimensions, the report said.

When the FAA was advised of this finding, it had the items re-tested by the manufacturers. When this was done, only three per cent were found not to comply, the report said.

The inspector-general's report said the differences raise serious questions about quality.

The article EM0009 reprinted above is relevant to Part 11 of the STAT 221 Course Materials.