

Bell Helicopter **TEXTRON**

A Subsidiary of Textron, Inc.

September 8, 2000

INFORMATION LETTER 47-00-8

TO: All Owners/Operators of Bell 47 Helicopters

SUBJECT: BELL 47 MAIN ROTOR GRIPS

FAA AD 2000-18-51 released on 31 August 2000, requires a 200 hour-interval repetitive Non-Destructive Inspection (NDI) of all Bell 47 main rotor grips, and the retirement of the grips after 1200 hours time in service.

Bell Helicopter ASB 47-85-12 Rev A, released on 3 Mar, 1986 introduced a 1200 hour retirement life with no requirement for scheduled NDI. The Bell Helicopter position remains unchanged since the original release of ASB 85-12 in December 1985, that genuine Bell grips operated and maintained within Bell Helicopter recommendations are suitable for 1200 hours of operation, and then retired. Bell Helicopter sees no benefit to repetitive NDI to assure continuing airworthiness of Bell 47 main rotor grips.

AD 2000-18-51 refers to a August 1998 accident in which a main rotor grip failed due to a fatigue crack. This accident investigation is continuing, the results of which have yet to conclusively determine a cause.

Bell Helicopter is working with the FAA to develop alternate means of assuring continued flight safety of the Bell 47. If an alternate method can be agreed upon, that is suitable to all parties, Bell Helicopter will issue the appropriate introductory documentation to the field.

Operation of main rotor grips beyond 1200 hours as per FAA AD 86-06-08, resulted in low demand for spare parts and currently inventory levels that are not able to meet this new demand. Bell Helicopter is expediting the procurement process to obtain spare parts as quickly as possible. Operators are encouraged to place an order with their approved Bell Helicopter parts supplier in order to reduce the delay in obtaining needed parts.