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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20591

A-68-28

OCT 14 1968

Mr. David D. Thomas
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Department of Transportation
Washington, D. C. 20590

Dear Mr. Thomas:

On December 24, 1967, a Stits Playboy Model SA-3 aircraft, N6050C, was involved in a fatal accident at Corona, California, as a result of an in-flight failure of the horizontal stabilizer. The failure was subsequently attributed to fatigue of the left forward interconnect tube used to connect the stabilizer to the fitting. This fitting, which is welded to the fuselage, receives the leading edge tube of the horizontal stabilizer and the assembly is then secured by a bolt through a 3/16-inch attachment hole in the tubes. Our examination of these parts disclosed evidence of fatigue at this hole in the interconnect tube.

A modification of this attachment fitting to preclude catastrophic failure of the kind sustained by N6050C has been proposed by Stits, and the pertinent drawing was distributed to a total of 40 owners, operators, or dealers. As of May 1968, however, 192 of these craft had been assembled, according to FAA records and, of these, 71 were currently active. Since the above distribution appears incomplete the Board surmises that many Stits owners are unaware of the danger this potential fatigue hazard poses.

In view of the above, the Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration take necessary action to provide for the correction of this potentially hazardous condition.

Our staff is available should any further information or assistance be desired.

Sincerely yours,

Original signed by
Joseph J. O'Connell, Jr.
Joseph J. O'Connell, Jr.
Chairman