

Boeing Commercial Airplanes Aviation Policy Brief

Air Transport of Lithium Batteries

POSITION

The Boeing Company supports and advocates for global harmonized requirements related to the air transport of batteries. Boeing supports overall efforts to develop effective protective packaging materials for dangerous goods packages with shipping containers or fire containment covers to facilitate the safe shipment of lithium batteries as cargo. Boeing fully supports the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) guidance from the Dangerous Goods Panel (DGP) on carriage of Lithium batteries.

BACKGROUND

In January 2010, the US Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to update the existing 2009 rules on the air transport of lithium batteries. At the conclusion of the public comment period DOT elected to follow existing ICAO guidance on the transport of lithium batteries. Subsequently, Congress adopted amendment HR 658 to the FAA reauthorization bill, which requires that U.S. regulations conform to ICAO standards with the exception that the existing DOT prohibition of lithium metal batteries as cargo on passenger airplanes remains in effect. HR 658 was enacted on February 14, of 2012 as part of the FAA Modernization & Reform Act.

On January 1, 2013, changes to ICAO's rules associated with transporting lithium batteries by air came into effect. These changes, intended to further enhance safe carriage, include required training for shippers; compliance checks prior to loading and stowage of lithium batteries aboard airplanes; and pilot notification of the presence, location, and quantity of most lithium battery shipments aboard the airplanes. Regulators are also provided a more comprehensive framework for training, oversight and enforcement.

Additionally, ICAO Electronic Bulletin 2011/7 approved by the Dangerous Goods Panel (DGP) has emphasized more stringent packaging standards for Lithium batteries; requires enhanced hazard communication on the presence of Lithium batteries in shipments, including "CAUTION!" on the shipping label. It is now forbidden to transport by air damaged or defective lithium batteries. Reporting of all incidents involving transport of lithium batteries to the appropriate national civil aviation authority is also required. And finally, a reminder to all member states to engage with the airline industry to promote this bulletin and safety awareness.

On February 13, 2013, ICAO issued a fast track amendment to the technical instructions to rescind permission allowing lithium ion airplane batteries up to 35kg to be shipped on passenger airplanes. This amendment will restrict air transport of lithium ion airplane batteries to cargo-only airplanes. Boeing and its suppliers were already in compliance with this standard. The technical instructions which had become effective on January 1, 2013 allowed airline operators the flexibility to transport lithium ion airplane batteries on either passenger or cargo-only airplanes.

***For further questions, please contact Shaunta Hyde (425)965-9903
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NEXT STEPS

The US DOT published an NPRM on August 15, 2012 to formally harmonize the Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMR) with the changes made to the ICAO Technical Instructions. The final rule is now adopted with voluntary compliance beginning January 1, 2013 and required compliance of all US Airlines to begin January 1, 2014.

In 2012 Boeing issued a multi-operator message to all of its airline operators with information containing guidance on the safe transport of lithium batteries. Boeing will continue to comply with all applicable regulations governing the carriage of lithium ion batteries as cargo. Boeing continues to work with ICAO, FAA, NTSB, and other government agencies and operators to share information and guidance.

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