

Transport of lithium batteries as cargo

Background

Since their introduction in the early 1990s Lithium batteries have been responsible for over 40 reported incidents involving smoke, fire, extreme heat or explosion in air transport. The incidents have occurred both in the passenger cabin and in cargo compartments when batteries have been shipped as cargo on passenger and cargo-only aircraft. Furthermore testing has shown that a Lithium battery fire can easily propagate through an entire shipment of batteries, and that fire suppression systems on aircraft may be ineffective in controlling a Lithium battery fire. Additionally, lithium battery shipments have been shown to greatly exacerbate a fire external to the shipment.

Despite this, when these batteries are shipped as cargo they are often not subject to the majority of the provisions for dangerous goods in the ICAO Technical Instructions, including the requirement to place a dangerous goods label on the package, the requirement to notify the pilot in command of their presence, the requirement for airline personnel to perform an acceptance check of the package, or the requirement for shippers to be trained in the dangerous goods regulations. Furthermore, the total quantity of lithium batteries in an aircraft cargo compartment or on an aircraft is not restricted, and there is no requirement to ensure that aircraft fire suppression systems are capable of allowing the aircraft to safely land in the event of a lithium battery fire.

IFALPA Position

IFALPA believes that current regulations do not properly address the risk posed by the carriage of lithium batteries as aircraft cargo. The Federation therefore urges ICAO, States, and Industry Stakeholders to take action to safely transport lithium batteries and protect commercial transport aircraft, crews and passengers from the risk of a fire caused or made worse by these batteries.

Additional Information

To find out more about IFALPA's position concerning the transport of Lithium batteries as cargo please refer to the Briefing Leaflet *15DGBL01 - Transport of lithium batteries as cargo*. To access this document click [here](#).