

New Restrictions on Shipping Lithium ion Batteries by Air Expected

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Recent recommendations from aircraft manufacturers, together with concerns expressed by pilots' associations and U.S. and international regulators, have resulted in a number of significant proposals for amending the international lithium ion battery dangerous goods air transport regulations. These proposals will be addressed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Dangerous Goods Panel in Montreal October 19 – 30, 2015.

If proposed changes are adopted by ICAO, they will have a significant economic impact on companies that ship lithium ion batteries by air. But the changes are not expected to impact the transport of equipment containing the batteries or airline passengers with lithium ion batteries in their carry-on baggage.

The aircraft manufacturers' recommendations primarily address the risks associated with "high density" or "bulk shipments" in cargo holds on passenger and cargo-only aircraft. As a result of these recommendations, numerous airlines have adopted new restrictions on transporting lithium ion batteries. These restrictions already are having an impact on how companies transport their lithium ion batteries globally.

The proposals that will be considered by ICAO next month could further complicate supply chain management.

For example, the International Federation of Airline Pilots Association (IFALPA) is seeking a ban on the transport of lithium ion batteries as cargo on passenger aircraft. Because many parts of the world are not served by cargo-only aircraft, this will further disrupt supply chains if IFALPA's proposal is adopted by ICAO.

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Practice Areas

Environment & Product Regulation
Hazardous Materials Transportation

Any changes adopted by the ICAO Dangerous Goods Panel during their October meeting will not go into effect until January 1, 2017.