

International Civil Aviation Organization Bans Bulk Shipments of Lithium Batteries as Cargo on Passenger Aircraft

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On February 22, 2016, the *International Civil Aviation Organization (“ICAO”)* Council [announced](#) an interim ban on bulk shipments of lithium ion batteries as cargo on passenger aircraft. The ICAO Council adopted this new aviation safety measure after the ICAO’s top technical body, the Air Navigation Commission, recommended a ban on these shipments at its January 27, 2016 meeting. The approved ban on bulk lithium battery shipments on passenger aircraft becomes effective almost immediately on April 1, 2016. The ICAO is also implementing other [significant changes](#) to the lithium battery rules in its 2017-2018 Edition of the Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air (“ICAO-TI”).

The ICAO has not released the details of the ban yet, but according to [reports](#), ICAO’s ban will apply to bulk shipments of lithium ion batteries under Packing Instruction 965 as cargo on passenger aircraft. Packing Instruction 965 covers lithium ion and lithium polymer cells and batteries packaged alone. The ban will not apply to shipments of lithium ion batteries packed with equipment or contained in equipment, or lithium batteries contained in personal electronic devices carried by passengers or crew. Packages of lithium batteries subject to the ban will be required to bear the “Cargo Aircraft Only” label. The ICAO will release additional details regarding the ban.

The ban on bulk lithium battery shipments as cargo on passenger aircraft, which goes into effect on April 1, 2016, is an interim measure as the ICAO considers improved packaging options for lithium ion batteries. The ICAO Council President stated, “this interim prohibition will continue to be in force as separate work continues through ICAO on a new lithium battery packaging performance standard, currently expected by 2018.” Until this new lithium battery packaging standard is established, the ban will remain in effect.

The ICAO ban reflects growing concerns over the safety of air shipments of lithium batteries and follows a string of developments at the international level and in the United States.

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