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Special Edition

Potential changes to the carriage of Lithium Metal Batteries on passenger aircrafts as cargo

On April 12th, 2014, The ICAO Dangerous Goods Panel (DGP) formally decided to prohibit the carriage of lithium metal batteries as cargo on passenger aircrafts. This decision still needs to be formally ratified by the ICAO Air Navigation Commission (ANC) and the ICAO Council. That process is expected to take place at the ANC in May and Council in June.

Unless the ANC or Council decide otherwise, the consequence of the decision will be that lithium metal batteries of all types, when shipped by themselves, will be forbidden on passenger aircraft as cargo as of 1st of January 2015. As such, we would expect only UN3090 for Lithium Metal batteries which are classified as Class 9 - Miscellaneous dangerous goods to be affected but not shipments shipped under UN3091 which is Lithium metal batteries contained in equipment,

It is clear from the ICAO DGP Meeting that this is simply the first step in looking further at the risks posed by shipments of lithium batteries. Indeed long term, it may well be that Lithium metal batteries will not be allowed on any aircraft, PAX or otherwise,

As the prohibition rule will only apply to such batteries when shipped by "themselves", it is unlikely to have such a wide effect to shippers as only a minority ship batteries. The types of commodities it might affect are Hi-tech and Retail, depending if the batteries are packed and shipped separately. The term Lithium battery refers to a family of batteries with different chemistries, comprising of many types of cathodes and electrolytes.

Lithium metal batteries are generally primary (non-rechargeable) batteries that have lithium metal or lithium compounds as an anode.

Lithium-ion batteries (sometimes abbreviated Li-ion batteries) are a type of secondary (rechargeable) battery commonly used in consumer electronics.

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