



AVIATION REGULATORS LAUNCH LITHIUM BATTERY SAFETY GUIDES

A series of videos highlighting the potential fire risks to aircraft posed by the improper carriage of lithium batteries, have just been made available for the aviation industry. The videos, produced by the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in association with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the United States, target key airline and airport staff, such as cargo handlers, check-in staff and cabin crew.

Freely available [online](#) the videos are intended to be used to supplement existing dangerous goods training programmes, to ensure aviation workers understand how the unique risks associated with lithium batteries impact on their frontline jobs. The videos highlight different scenarios by recreating real-life situations. The correct procedures for dealing with those situations are demonstrated in detail.

Lithium batteries power most personal electronic devices passengers routinely fly with, either carried in hand luggage or packed in hold bags. Although lithium batteries are very safe, their high energy levels mean they can pose a fire risk if damaged. As a result they must be treated with care and stowed appropriately during flight. Lithium batteries are known to have been the cause of a number of fires on-board aircraft and during ground handling. Additionally, poor quality or counterfeit batteries, which are known to be in wide circulation, pose an additional safety risk.

In 2010 a passenger seat caught fire on board an [Air France Boeing B777](#) over the Atlantic. The fire was successfully extinguished and there were no injuries to passengers or crew. Subsequent investigation found a passenger's spare lithium battery had fallen down the side of the seat which was then crushed as the seat was reclined, causing the battery to ignite.

Mark Swan, Head of the CAA's Safety and Airspace Regulation Group, said:

“We know that incorrectly packaged or counterfeit lithium batteries are a potential fire risk. The CAA and FAA have, therefore, launched this industry awareness campaign to help manage that risk. We would like airline passengers themselves to reduce risks by only taking on board lithium batteries that have been purchased from legitimate outlets and carry any spare batteries in hand baggage packed in individual plastic bags or containers; not in items checked in as hold baggage.”

There are two types of lithium battery. Lithium-ion, which are rechargeable and used in laptops, tablets and smart phones, and the non-rechargeable lithium-metal batteries, found in items such as watches. Both types pose a fire risk if not appropriately handled.

The videos are available on the CAA’s YouTube channel www.youtube.com/ukcaa.

The CAA and FAA have a long history of safety collaboration, the most recent fire safety initiative was to tackle the risks of on-board fires occurring due to faulty electrical wiring. A [video](#) aimed at aircraft maintenance engineers drew attention to the damage that can be caused to wiring during routine maintenance. Both regulators will continue to engage in similar projects in the future, more information on collaborative fire safety research can be found at <http://www.fire.tc.faa.gov/>