



Shipping lithium batteries by mail

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If you're in the hazmat business, you're no stranger to Publication 52 from the United States Postal Service. Affectionately referred to as "Pub 52," this public document (a.k.a. "Hazardous, Restricted, and Perishable Mail") outlines the dos and don'ts for the safe transport of Dangerous Goods via the U.S. mail.

One of the thorniest topics in Pub 52 is lithium batteries. As more new e-commerce companies depend on cheap, efficient, rechargeable battery power, transport of lithium batteries by mail will only grow.

Not surprisingly, shipping lithium batteries by mail is even more complicated than shipping them by other means. We recently posted a complete guide to shipping lithium batteries via the USPS based on the most recent update of Pub 52 from June 2018.

However--you knew that was coming, right?--you cannot ship fully regulated or the damaged or recalled versions of these batteries via U.S. mail. Here's another way to think of it: If the batteries you want to mail require a Class 9 hazard label, per 49 CFR 173.185(c) requirements, they're a no-go with USPS.

As every hazmat pro knows, eligible and compliant are two entirely separate things. Your batteries might be eligible for shipping via U.S. mail, but you need the right battery packaging to make those shipments compliant.

You must follow USPS Packaging Instructions 9D strictly to prevent batteries from short-circuiting, overheating or catching fire. Your outer packaging doesn't have to be UN Specification, but it does need to be a strong, sealed and cushioned package to prevent movement.

International packaging requirements require solid, rigid packaging (to prevent crushing or exposure) that's adequately sized to see the lithium battery mark (plus applicable telephone number) without folding. International shipments in padded and poly bags are only allowed with button cell batteries under a very specific set of circumstances.

Getting USPS lithium battery shipping requirements to live in complete harmony with all other intermodal carriers and jurisdictions is umm, well ... as easy as trying to sing all the parts of a Jonas Brothers song at the same time. (Ask your kids.)

When it comes to harmonization, PHMSA and international organizations such as ICAO and IMO have made great strides to synchronize their regulations, but the U.S. Postal Service isn't quite there yet. Ensuring you've met all the end-to-end mail and shipping restrictions requires extra diligence.



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Here's the bottom line: Even with the current, complex restrictions, the reduced shipping costs and recordkeeping provisions of mailing lithium batteries can make the USPS a smart and viable option. Now quit humming "A Little Bit Longer" and get back to work!

For more details about shipping lithium batteries by mail, visit our page on USPS Publication 52: What You Need to Know Before Mailing Lithium Batteries, or call us at 800.621.5808.

are there added charges when shipping lithium batteries? I ship through Ebay so when things require extra fees USPS charges my customer so I'd like to know in advance please?

Contact us for free full report

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