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**Federal Aviation
Administration**

InFO

Information for Operators

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http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/info

An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements with relatively low urgency or impact on safety.

SUBJECT: In-flight Notification to Flightcrew of Possible Baggage/Cargo Contamination from Hazardous Materials Spills

Purpose: This InFO emphasizes the notification responsibilities of a certificate holder's management and those specific persons exercising operational control. It has been developed in response to National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) safety recommendation A-00-53 and supersedes Flight Standards Information Bulletin for Air Transportation (FSAT) 02-01A.

Background:

On October 28, 1998, 2 gallons of a 35-percent hydrogen peroxide solution in water, an oxidizer with corrosive properties, spilled in a cargo compartment of Northwest Airlines (Northwest) flight 957. The solution leaked from two undeclared 1-gallon plastic bottles that were stored in an ice chest belonging to a passenger on the flight.

A. The leak was not discovered until cargo handlers in Memphis began to unload the baggage on flight 957. Thinking that the spilled liquid was water, the cargo handlers ignored the leak and transferred some of the baggage to other Northwest flights, including flight 7 bound for Seattle, Washington. When flight 7 arrived in Seattle, two bags in a cargo compartment were smoldering, including one that had come from flight 957.

B. As a result of the spill, several people required treatment. In Memphis, 11 employees were treated at the airport's first aid station because their hands had been exposed to the hydrogen peroxide. Two more employees went to a local clinic, where they were treated and released. In Seattle, the employee that removed the smoldering bags from the cargo compartment was exposed to fumes. He went to a hospital and was released. None of the injuries were serious.

C. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) determined that ground personnel in Seattle had received sufficient notification of the boarding of hazardous materials, but the potential fire hazard had not been mentioned. In particular, the flightcrew was never alerted about any potential hazard aboard their airplane. Several airplanes had departed before the nature of the spill was discovered and the fire hazard was understood.

D. This incident clarifies the importance of timely and effective notification to the flightcrew about any baggage or cargo on their airplane that is involved in a hazardous materials spill. When making that notification, the certificate holder should ensure that the flightcrew is provided with appropriate procedures to prevent or mitigate any consequences of the spill.

E. NTSB Recommendation A-00-53 is one of three recommendations issued to the Federal Aviation administration (FAA) in response to this incident. The NTSB concluded that the air carrier failed to alert airplane flightcrews that baggage on their airplanes had been involved in a hazardous materials spill. Although this incident did not have severe consequences, it had the potential for disaster.

Recommended action: Directors of safety and directors of operations (Part 121); directors of operations (part 135); training managers; and pilots should be aware of the contents of this InFO. In addition, certificate holders should review the hazardous materials spill procedures outlined in their manuals. Each certificate holder should ensure that the written functions of the Director of Operations explicitly include the responsibility to notify flight crewmembers through the dispatch office or air traffic control, while in-flight, of potential danger when baggage and/or cargo on board the airplane is known or believed to have been involved in a hazardous materials spill.