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News

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DOT Issues New Flight Safety Rule for E-Cigarettes

WASHINGTON – In its continuing effort to improve transportation safety, the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration today issued an interim final rule (IFR) to prohibit passengers and crewmembers from carrying battery-powered portable electronic smoking devices (e.g. e-cigarettes, e-cigs, e-cigars, e-pipes, personal vaporizers, electronic nicotine delivery systems) in checked baggage and prohibit passengers and crewmembers from charging the devices and/or batteries on board the aircraft.

“We know from recent incidents that e-cigarettes in checked bags can catch fire during transport,” said Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. “Fire hazards in flight are particularly dangerous. Banning e-cigarettes from checked bags is a prudent safety measure.”

On January 22, 2015, the Federal Aviation Administration issued a Safety Alert for Operators recommending that air carriers require their passengers to carry e-cigarettes and related devices exclusively in the cabin of the aircraft. Also, on June 9, 2015, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) published an addendum to the 2015-2016 ICAO Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air prohibiting the carriage of e-cigarettes in checked baggage and restricting the charging of these devices while on board the aircraft.

“The importance of the safety of the flying public provides good cause for our issuing an IFR,” said PHMSA Administrator Marie Therese Dominguez. “E-cigarettes in checked bags present a safety risk because they are capable of generating extreme heat, which could lead to a fire on board the aircraft.”

Passengers may continue to carry e-cigarettes for personal use in carry-on baggage or on their person but may not use them on flights. The Department’s current regulatory ban on smoking of tobacco products on passenger flights includes the use of electronic cigarettes. Nevertheless, to prevent passenger or crewmember confusion, the Department has proposed to amend its existing airline smoking rule to explicitly ban use of electronic cigarettes aboard aircraft.

The IFR does not prohibit a passenger from carrying other devices containing batteries for personal use (such as laptop computers, cell phones, cameras, etc.) in checked or carry-on baggage, nor does it restrict a passenger from transporting batteries for personal use in carry-on baggage.

An e-cigarette is a battery-powered device that simulates tobacco smoking by producing a heated vapor, which resembles smoke.

The IFR is effective seven days after publication in the Federal Register. For a copy of the IFR go to: <http://phmsa.dot.gov/hazmat/regs/rulemaking/final>.

For more information on FAA's Safety Alert for Operators, go to:

http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo/all_safos/media/2015/SAFO15003.pdf

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration develops and enforces regulations for the safe, reliable, and environmentally sound operation of the nation's 2.6 million mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly 1 million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air. Please visit <http://phmsa.dot.gov> or https://twitter.com/PHMSA_DOT for more information.

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