

Lithium Battery Fire Awareness

Background

Whilst Lithium battery fire awareness has already been improved for flight and cabin crews, recent inflight and ground incidents have shown that passengers and, to some extent, ground staff still have little knowledge on specific issues such as thermal runaway within Portable Electronic Devices (PEDs), or the carriage of spare batteries.

Position

IFALPA believes that better situational awareness on Lithium battery fire from passengers PED is urgently needed. Indeed, despite the mandatory training for ground staff, the placards at check-in desks or the legal instructions to be read before buying an airline ticket, very few people are able to assess if their batteries are subject to restrictions of carriage.

The situation has worsened lately due to:

- The increasing use of self-check-in/self-boarding, which has reduced to a minimum the visual contact between passengers and ground staff. Simply ticking a box online to “confirm that there are no dangerous or regulated goods inside the belongings” has a much lower impact than a face-to-face interview.
- The growing number of Lithium batteries contained in PEDs carried by passengers (cellphones, laptops, tablets, cameras, medical appliances, watches, etc...), generally without any specified limit, and no screening for checked-in bags.
- Boarding employees and security personnel receiving little or no training or experience on regulations for Lithium batteries.

IFALPA is very concerned about this issue, and urges stakeholders; regulators, airlines, airports and global handlers to take initiatives and use appropriate media for advertising basic guidelines and best practices about on board carriage of Lithium batteries by passengers.

The following are considered good examples of such initiatives:

- Leaflets on cargo awareness and related video broadcast on the internet and at airports.
- In-flight safety announcements about contacting cabin crew immediately in the event of a passenger PED getting stuck in a seat or misplaced
- Announcements in the airport terminals
- Limitation of the number of PEDs of the same type per passenger
- Additional screening for abusive PED shipments/counterfeit batteries
- Whenever carry-on luggage has to be loaded in the hold, passengers need to be questioned as to whether it contains Lithium batteries
- National Regulation requiring extra screening for hand luggage to be loaded in the hold
- Dedicated bag tags for all hand luggage explaining the applicable restrictions on Lithium batteries
- Production of informative videos by National Aviation Authorities

IFALPA strongly supports these initiatives, which all help raising the global awareness of the risk posed by Lithium batteries taken on board, and are therefore a welcome contribution to flight safety.