

United States Postal Service®

INDUSTRY ALERT

New Mailing Standards for Lithium Batteries

Harmonized Standards with Domestic and International Agencies

As part of the Postal Service's continued efforts to keep you informed, this is a reminder that effective March 2, 2015 the Postal Service is revising its mailing standards regarding lithium batteries to align with new regulations recently implemented by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

This alignment is the final step in a series of amendments to harmonize domestic and international standards by mirroring DOT's Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMR) with the provisions of the United Nations (UN) Model Regulations, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code.

While the DOT had a voluntary compliance date of August 6, 2014, and a delayed compliance date of February 6, 2015, the Postal Service notified its customers via a *Federal Register* notice on January 26, 2015, with a subsequent *Postal Bulletin* article (<http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2015/pb22408/pb22408.pdf>) published on February 5, 2015 announcing a March 2, 2015 effective date for its customers.

Many of the USPS revised mailing standards now align with current UPS and FedEx requirements, bringing consistency across the industry, and provide standards that mailers are already familiar with.

These revisions include:

- Using terminology describing lithium content in watt-hours for lithium-ion cells and batteries;
- Adopting separate shipping descriptions for lithium metal batteries and lithium-ion batteries;
- Adding new requirements for the transport of small lithium cells and batteries contained in equipment; and
- Adding new marking requirements and options for lithium batteries installed in equipment, packaged with equipment, and shipped without equipment.

Because the terminology used when describing batteries is broad in nature, the Postal Service adds a new "definitions" section to reflect what is already commonly used in the industry and by other regulatory agencies.

The Postal Service also makes clear that, other than terminology describing watt-hours, the requirements concerning lithium batteries in international shipping have not changed.

When mailing to international destinations, including APO/FPO/DPO destinations, mailpieces containing lithium batteries may only be sent installed in the equipment they operate. They are not permitted to be shipped with equipment or sent separately. Additionally, no markings or labels that identify the mailpiece contents as lithium batteries are permitted on the mailpiece, even though they may be used or required domestically.

The online Publication 52, *Hazardous, Restricted, and Perishable Mail*, is expected to be updated the first week in March. Pub 52 is available on the Postal Explorer website at pe.usps.com. Mailers may also review the *Postal Bulletin* article published on February 5, 2015 for the complete revision article.

While not all encompassing, a few examples are shown below to indicate before and after scenarios:

Domestic Lithium Battery Mailability		
Item	Previous	New
Button cells		
Very small lithium metal or lithium-ion batteries	Subject to the overall quantity limitations	No limit on cells/batteries up to 5-1/2 pounds
Rechargeable		
Change in Terminology	Secondary	Lithium-ion (or polymer)
Cells	Each cell must not exceed 20 Wh	same
Batteries	Each battery must not exceed 100 Wh	same
Quantity limitations	No more than 3 batteries	8 cells or 2 batteries
Example: Cell phone	3 batteries	8 single-cell batteries or 2 multi-cell batteries
Button cells, or ≤ 4 lithium cells, or 2 lithium batteries (installed in equipment)	No markings required	No markings required. Optional use of DOT label permitted
For $4 >$ up to ≤ 8 lithium cells	Markings indicating lithium batteries required (batteries installed in equipment are exempt)	Markings indicating lithium batteries required, may optionally use DOT label to meet this requirement (additional documentation required)
Nonrechargeable		
Change in Terminology	Primary	Lithium Metal (or alloy)
Content	Each cell cannot contain more than 1g lithium content. Each battery cannot contain more than 2g aggregate lithium content	same
Cells	Mailpiece weight limit only	8 cells
Batteries	Mailpiece weight limit only	2 batteries
Mailpiece Weight	11 pounds (contained in or packed with equipment)	same
Mailpiece Weight	5 pounds (individual batteries in originally sealed packaging)	same
Button cells, or ≤ 4 lithium cells, or 2 lithium batteries	Markings required for batteries shipped with equipment or packaged separately.	No markings required for batteries contained in equipment. Optional use of DOT label for air transportation. DOT label required for batteries shipped with equipment or packaged separately (additional marking required for packaged separately)

For 4> up to ≤8 lithium cells	Markings indicating lithium batteries required	Markings indicating lithium batteries required, may optionally use DOT label to meet this requirement (additional documentation required)
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