



Person Emitting Radiation

Guideline for the transport of a person who is, or may be, emitting radiation

Introduction

During the 2011 nuclear accident in Fukushima many stakeholders became aware of public health emergencies other than those involving communicable diseases. While some areas of the aviation industry may be quite well prepared to respond to a pandemic or a similar event, it was realized that the response plan for a pandemic is not automatically relevant to other types of public health emergency.

To help manage this nuclear event, ICAO created a Transport Task force with six other United Nations (UN) agencies, including WHO, IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), WMO (World Meteorological Organization), WMO (World Maritime Organization), UNWTO (UN World Tourism Organization) and ILO (International Labour Organization). IATA and ACI (Airports Council International) were members of the task force. This ad hoc collaboration was very helpful in successfully managing the incident.

As a result of this successful initiative, ICAO and the other partners are now participating in the new Inter-agency Committee on Radiological and Nuclear Emergencies (IACRNE) ad hoc working group on air and maritime transportation so that all the stakeholders are better prepared should a similar incident happens again.

ICAO used the opportunity to amend its 'Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air'. At the time these did not provide for a person who has been subjected to accidental intake or external contamination of radioactive material to be transported for medical treatment. This amendment can be found in Part 1, Chapter 6, page 1-6-1.

IATA believes that guidance material on this subject would be valuable for its member airlines. IATA was also requested by its member airlines to consider guidance material in case of in-flight notification by a person emitting radiation.

Pre-flight notification

Persons containing low levels of radioactive material as a result of medical diagnostic procedures or treatment have been transported on commercial aircraft for many years as an accepted 'exemption' to the ICAO Dangerous Goods requirements. However, the ICAO exemption did not apply to an irradiated individual (from a source other than medical diagnosis or treatment) that needed to travel in order to reach a suitable treatment facility.

Airlines usually do not know about radiation from within the body resulting from diagnostic procedures, as advice on travel is given by the treating nuclear medicine physicians who take into account the public risk before releasing the patient from the hospital. Also the airline may not know about contamination of an individual by radioactive material on the skin or clothes, but if it happens in the context of a nuclear accident a request may be made to an airline for such transport, prior to flight.

If a request is made for transport of an individual who is emitting radiation, the airline can consult the guidance material developed by ICAO in coordination with IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) at:

<http://www.icao.int/safety/DangerousGoods/Documents/Guidance%20Material/GuidanceMaterial.pdf>

and advise the requesting physician that the passenger can be transported as long as the criteria described in the guidance material are met.

In-flight notification

It is most unlikely that a passenger that has decided to travel in spite of knowing that he is potentially emitting radiation will advise the cabin crew in flight. However, if it should occur, the following guidance is provided. This guidance has been developed in cooperation with ICAO, IAEA and nuclear medicine specialists.

- If there are some empty seats on the aircraft, relocate adjacent passengers so that the suspected case is somewhat isolated from the other passengers.

- If the aircraft is full, but a young child (5 years or less) and/or a pregnant woman is sitting in the seats beside, in front or behind the suspected case, tactfully relocate the child and/or pregnant woman.
- Ask the suspected case to minimize movement away from the allocated seat.
- Ask the suspected case to use the same washroom when he/she requires to use one and to wash his/her hands properly. Prevent other people using the washroom.
- Notify the pilot in command of the issue so he can notify the destination as per ICAO regulations and procedures.
- Prevent access to overhead luggage area where the suspected case's personal effects are stored during the flight and, once on the ground wait for the clearance from the State authorities before accessing this particular overhead bin. Passengers that have no luggage in that particular bin can remove their luggage and disembark.

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