

6 Keys to Safe

Hazmat Shipping



The last thing you want when shipping hazardous materials (hazmat) is uncertainty. But the intertwining rules and regulations can easily trip up even seasoned shippers. In this brief guide, we break down the keys to organizing your operations and using partners to keep hazmat materials — and all parties handling these shipments — safe.

#1 Regulations

The combined volumes of laws and compliance standards from several regulatory bodies are dizzying. On any shipment, you could be working with rules from the Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), International Air Transport Association (IATA), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or the Environment Protection Agency (EPA). By working with your carrier or talking to a third-party logistics (3PL) partner, you can identify which regulations you need to follow early in the process — setting your team and carrier up for success.

#2 Certification

It's the shipper's responsibility to follow compliance, even for seemingly less-harmful materials like nail polish, perfume or aftershave. Before sending a single package, shippers must have everyone handling these items pass and maintain certification. If you have new hazmat handlers on the team, they can work under a certified worker's supervision for 90 days, so use this to your advantage to keep shipments moving while the team hits the books.

#3 Safety Data Sheets

There's a lot of information to digest for hazmat shipping, but you don't have to memorize it all. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) contain an encyclopedia of knowledge you'll need to reference for every shipment. This includes identifying compatibility issues with adjacent shipments, material classification, warning labels, markings, packaging requirements, health and hazard information, handling safety and more.

#4 Documentation

Nobody likes paperwork, but taking a moment on the details early on will save you from delays and potential legal issues later. Carriers cannot accept your shipment without proper documentation. This includes the North American (NA) or United Nations (UN) number, complete technical name (including chemical compounds), hazmat class (corrosive, flammable, etc.), packing group (PG) number (i.e., Group I, II or III), emergency agency contact information (not your business phone number) and the number of containers and pieces in your shipment. Don't skimp on details or generalize. If you don't know, refer to the SDS or your carrier to talk it through before the truck pulls up. And don't forget to keep your shipper declaration for the required two years.

#5 Packaging

Boxes lying around the warehouse won't cut it. Containers, drums and other shipping materials must pass rigorous tests, such as vapor pressure, leak-proofing, drops, vibration, chemical compatibility and stacking before being qualified for hazmat shipping. You will need to determine the PG number of your items — which can be found in hazardous material tables from your carrier or regulatory body — and match shipping materials to your item's danger levels. PG I is the greatest danger, PG III is considered low danger and PG II is in-between. Refer to SDS guidelines and shipping material documentation to package items properly.

#6 Labeling

All the precautions and protocol to ship your item wouldn't amount to much if handlers couldn't tell one box from another inside the truck. Every hazardous package needs unobstructed labels, markings and placards. As per DOT guidelines, this includes orientation arrows, shipper information, identification number, shipping name markings and hazard class labels and

Get hazmat right

Shippers have a lot to manage to get hazardous shipping right. But the complexity doesn't have to slow you down. A 3PL like Worldwide Express, with its resources and tight carrier relationships, can work on your behalf to get the details straight and lighten your logistical load. Whether it's freight or parcel, talk to our hazmat experts to find the right solution.

