WHY DID MY HAZMAT SHIPMENT GET REJECTED?
COMMON CAUSES OF REJECTION AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

Executive Summary

If a carrier rejects your hazardous materials shipment, your team must spend valuable time repackaging, relabeling, rewriting paperwork, or otherwise correcting mistakes big and small. Held-up and rejected shipments disrupt logistics, stall your operations, and can severely impact the bottom line.
Staying Off the “Bump List”

Rejection has consequences beyond the man-hours lost redoing work. Major carriers can maintain what’s sometimes called a bump list in industry, which details rejected hazardous materials shipments.

Hazmat inspectors visit carriers’ distribution centers and can use that bump list for inspection referrals.*

To prevent rejection and the bad outcomes that follow, let’s review some common causes of hazmat rejection and spot red flags before they cause an issue.

*Source: US FAA Hazmat Specialist Visit, Lion’s Hazmat Air Shipper Workshop

Undeclared hazmat shipments

Knowing which materials are regulated as hazmat—and which are not—is the first step toward properly preparing the shipment for transport. If you offer a hazardous material as non-hazardous, the carrier may notice this during the acceptance check and reject the shipment.

If your package is accepted and fails in transit, the carrier is required to file an incident report with the US DOT, which may lead to a hazmat inspection and possible penalties—not to mention exposing supply-chain personnel and the public to unnecessary risk.
Avoid these shipping paper mistakes

The shipping paper is one of the most important documents in the hazmat shipping process. Call it a bill of lading, a Shipper’s Dec, a Manifest, or whatever you want; it’s a certified written record of what you ship, its hazards, how much there is, and where to go for more information.

Avoid these easy-to-make shipping paper mistakes to prevent rejection:

**NOT LISTING THE QUANTITY AND TYPE OF PACKAGE**

You must document the type and quantity of packages included in every hazmat shipment on the shipping papers. Examples include “12 cylinders,” “10 fibreboard boxes,” “8 drums.” [49 CFR 172.202(a)(7)]

**USING AN INCORRECT PROPER SHIPPING NAME**

When you ship a hazardous material, you must choose the correct Proper Shipping Name, or PSN, from the US DOT’s Hazmat Table at 49 CFR 172.101. An unapproved or incorrect shipping name—or even a misspelled name—can result in rejection. [49 CFR 172.202(a)(2)]

**OMITTING REQUIRED INFORMATION FROM YOUR BASIC DESCRIPTION**

Often, additional information is required with your hazmat “basic description.” That may be technical information to supplement a “generic” shipping name, the letters “RQ” to indicate a reportable quantity of hazardous substances, or the phrase “limited quantity” where applicable. [49 CFR 172.203]

Read more: How to Build the Perfect Hazmat Basic Description
Why Did My Hazmat Shipment Get Rejected?

Use the right packaging

If you offer a hazmat shipment in a package that’s not compatible with your material or not strong enough to contain it, rejection is likely. Authorized hazmat packagings bear distinctive markings—and your carrier will notice if they’re not there or if they don’t jive with what you’re shipping.

X, Y, AND Z RATINGS

Some hazardous materials are more “hazardous” than others. Often, a hazardous material requires a specific strength of package, designated by an X, Y, or Z rating. If the package strength you choose is not correct for your material, your carrier may notice and require repackaging.

DAMAGED, DENTED, OR LEAKING PACKAGING

This one may seem obvious, but if your hazmat package is damaged or leaking on the loading dock, your carrier will (and should) reject it.
Non-compliant hazmat marks and labels

Hazmat labels are bright and they stick out. Labeling mistakes stick out too.

Here are some common marking and labeling mistakes to avoid to ensure acceptance and smooth delivery of your hazmat shipments:

**NONCOMPLIANT MARKINGS OR LABELS**

Hazmat non-bulk shipments must be marked with three pieces of information: a Proper Shipping Name, the identification number, and a “to” or “from” address. If this information is not marked on the package properly, expect delays.

In addition, hazmat markings must meet minimum size requirements as of January 1, 2017. Read more: How Small Is Too Small for Hazmat Markings?

**HAZARD LABELS TOO FAR APART**

If your package requires multiple labels, the labels must be within six inches of each other.

**HAZARD LABELS TOO CLOSE TOGETHER**

The borders of your hazmat labels must not overlap or obscure each other in any way.

**LABELS THAT BEND AROUND CORNERS**

Hazard labels must be placed flat on one (or more) side(s) of the package. Labels may not “fold” or “bend” over the corner of the package.

**LABELS NOT VISIBLE THROUGH AN OVERPACK**

If you use an overpack—for example, four drums wrapped together on a pallet—all labels on all containers must be visible and legible through the overpack. If all labels are not visible, the shipper must reproduce the markings and labels on the outside of the overpack.
Effective hazmat training is your best defense

When every member of your shipping team knows his or her responsibilities for hazardous materials, mistakes get caught earlier and rejection can be avoided.

Find hazmat training options for new and experienced personnel at Lion.com. Choose from workshops presented nationwide; convenient online courses; and live, instructor-led webinars to meet 49 CFR, IATA DGR, and IMDG Code training mandates.

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