



## **Safety Alert**

**September 15, 2011**

**Subject: Carrying Hazardous Materials on Commercial Air Flights**

**Area of Concern: Safe Commercial Air Travel**

**Distribution: All Wildland Firefighters**

**Discussion:** During the 2011 fire season there have been at least two instances of wildland firefighters attempting to check prohibited materials in their baggage for a commercial flight. Two different employees allegedly offered checked baggage that contained undeclared hazardous material, specifically Signal Devices, Hand (Fusees), to American Eagle Airlines for air transportation from Abilene, Texas.

Both of these employees are embarrassed and very apologetic this incident has occurred. Both employees stated that this was an oversight and they had no intention of violating FAA regulations. They both had similar stories, that they were packing for the return flight and overlooked the fusees in their line-gear.

There is a long list of prohibited items that are not allowed to be carried on commercial airlines, either in carry-on luggage or in checked baggage. The entire list with specific instructions can be found at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>

Please note that "flares" are specifically mentioned as prohibited items BOTH in carry-on and checked baggage. There are a number of other incendiary devices and substances that are similarly prohibited, including "strike-anywhere" matches and gasoline.

American Airlines' web site provides the following information about the potential consequences of failing to identify prohibited items to the airline:

**You must declare any dangerous goods to the airline. Failure to do so violates U.S. Federal Law. Violators may be subject to a maximum penalty of 5 years' imprisonment and \$250,000 or more (49 U.S.C. 5124). You are also subject to being placed on the "No Fly" list.**

Recommended Actions for Firefighters:

1. Become familiar with the items that are prohibited on commercial airlines. This information is widely available via the Internet.
2. Prior to travel on any aircraft (commercial, charter or government-owned), thoroughly check all your bags for any incendiary devices, liquid fuels, strike-anywhere matches or other prohibited items. If in doubt, declare the item or substance to the airline or pilot.
3. Crew supervisors: ensure that assigned personnel conduct a pre-boarding check of their gear for prohibited items. Ensure that chainsaws are properly purged of fuel according to agency policy.

For further information contact:

Larry Sutton at 208-387-5970, or  
Peter Tolosano at 916-640-1050