

UK FLIGHT SAFETY COMMITTEE



CARGO SAFETY BULLETIN

NUMBER 3

DANGEROUS GOODS – BE ALERT!

In the incident outlined below, a catastrophe was averted because the aircraft was on the ground and the crew acted promptly, but....

A small glass bottle containing just one litre of a DG liquid was shipped by road from France to the UK. From the Shipping Agent to the Cargo Consolidation Agent (to build up the pallet and raise the NOTOC) it then went by road again to LHR where it was delayed for more than a day due to an aircraft fault. Eventually, it was loaded on a B747 and as the aircraft was pushed back the crew began to notice irritating fumes. The aircraft was returned to the stand, the crew evacuated and the Fire Service dealt with the incident. The crew was affected badly and needed hospital treatment.

So what went wrong?

ERRORS

- The Shipping Agent appears to have packed the bottle incorrectly. When the bottle was fractured, the already noxious contents reacted with the polystyrene surrounding it aggravating an already serious poisonous fume problem.
- The bottle should have been kept at between minus 15°C to minus 20°C but this special handling instruction was not included on the Shipper's Declaration and so for five days, as the package was moved about and then delayed, it was at ambient temperature.

Most probably, the bottle fractured shortly before or during the actual aircraft loading procedure because the ullage (the empty space within the bottle above the liquid) was insufficient to allow for thermal expansion. (and/or, the bottle was flawed).

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HOW COULD THIS HAVE BEEN PREVENTED

Apart from the two errors above, the required external checks were made properly by all concerned. But we nearly lost a B747 and its crew! And so, be alert and:

Don't Assume, Check!

[The liquid was UN2924, Class 3; it is volatile, flammable, and irritating to the skin, eyes, nose and lungs. It may be carried on Cargo Aircraft Only.]