

## What are dangerous goods?

Dangerous goods are articles or substances, which are capable of posing a significant risk to health, safety or to property and must be packed in accordance with International Air Transport Association (IATA) regulations.

Dangerous goods can be classified into nine classes, one of which is Toxic and Infectious substances. Infectious substances are those that are infectious to humans and/or animals, eg. bacteria and viruses, and genetically modified microorganisms biological products, diagnostic specimens and clinical and medical waste.

Infectious substances are known to contain, or are reasonably expected to contain pathogens (such as *E. coli* O157:H7). For example, in the situation where a meat sample gives a presumptive positive for the *E. coli* O157 screening test (See Information sheet 'Testing for *E. coli* O157:H7 or H-' from [www.meatupdate.csiro.au](http://www.meatupdate.csiro.au)), a commercial testing laboratory is required to confirm the positive sample. Therefore, the samples should be packed and transported according to the Dangerous Goods Regulations ie. by qualified personnel, in packages designed for the transport of biological hazards together with the required documentation (Figure 1).

## Do I need to train?

IATA dangerous goods regulations clearly state that before a consignment of dangerous goods is offered for transport all relevant persons involved in its preparation must have received training to enable them to fully comply with the regulations. Recurrent training must take place within 24 months of previous training to ensure knowledge is current, a record of this must be maintained. Training courses are often conducted through the Australian Society for Microbiology (ASM). Some shipping organisations such as Marair Freight also conduct courses.

All infectious substances shipped by air (domestic or international) are covered by these regulations. Some shipping agents will meet all the requirements for you including packing and the filling out of the declaration. Some suggested companies may be DGM –(Dangerous Goods Management) and Marair Freight. This is of course at additional cost and has been limited to the major cities.

Note that the regulations for shipping by road are moving

towards the same restrictions that apply for transport by air.



Figure 1. A dangerous goods packing container and declaration form for the transportation of infectious substances.

## Penalties for non-compliance

The Civil Aviation act 1988 lists penalties some of which are:

- a \$3000 fine for misrepresenting the cargo ie. not declaring as dangerous goods;
- 2 years imprisonment for knowingly making a misrepresentation;
- a \$3000 fine if the people involved did not undertake training.

In addition, each penalty can be multiplied by the number of infringements. For example if you shipped, on four separate occasions, items that should have been declared as dangerous goods, then you are liable for 4 x \$3000.

## Further Information

For further information, please contact Lesley Duffy or Dr Narelle Fegan at Food Science Australia, Ph. 07 3214 2000.