

# Lessons Learned

## Air Transport of Dangerous Goods



### What Happened?

A WCM researcher attempted to carry a chemical that is considered a **Dangerous Good** for air transport onto a flight. While proceeding through security, the individual was stopped and questioned by Transportation Security Administration (TSA). The scientist was unaware that when this particular chemical, 2-Mercaptoethanol, is transported by air, it is classified as Class 6.1-Toxic. This chemical has a disagreeable and choking odor, similar to rotten eggs.

When a reagent is identified as a Dangerous Good, it must be assessed, packaged, labeled, and documented by a trained person, in compliance with the current **International Air Transport Association (IATA) regulations**. The chemical mentioned above is not authorized for air transport in checked or carry-on luggage, regardless of the applied packaging and labeling. Additionally, its strong odor has the potential to incapacitate the flight crew, pilots, and passengers, which may interfere with aircraft operation. Upon discovery at the airport, **the chemical was confiscated and disposed of**.



*2-Mercaptoethanol Bottle:  
Unassuming chemical bottles may  
contain or be considered a Dangerous  
Good.*

### Why Did This Happen?

- The researcher had not received IATA training.
- The researcher was unaware of Dangerous Goods classifications, IATA regulations, the noxious odors released by the chemical, and the information listed on the Safety Data Sheet.
- A full assessment of the chemical components was not completed before attempting to carry the bottle onto the flight.
- Guidance from EHS was not requested when determining the safety hazards of carrying this chemical onto a passenger flight.
- Airport screeners successfully stopped undeclared Dangerous Goods from boarding a flight.

### Lessons Learned

- The WCMC Shipping Manager developed a **Dangerous Goods Awareness Training Program** for groups that are likely to ship or transport potential dangerous goods onto a flight. Contact EHS for more information and to request training.
- Only IATA-certified staff may complete dangerous goods classifications.
- Researchers and laboratory staff may be unaware of the dangers a substance may pose to flight crews and passengers during air transport, despite often working with Dangerous Goods. Safety Data Sheets and many other resources are available to help initially identify potential Dangerous Goods.
- Transporters and shippers of Dangerous Goods via air must fully comply with applicable regulations set forth by the export country, all transit layover locations, and the importing country. Not adhering to these regulations may be in breach of national law. Therefore, the person and associated entity may be subject to legal penalties and fines.
- An IATA training course instructs shippers how to transport hazardous materials by air safely.
- To request a Dangerous Goods assessment and classification from EHS, please complete the [Dangerous Goods Shipment Assessment Form](#).
- For more information regarding shipping, please visit the [EHS Shipping webpage](#).



**Weill Cornell  
Medicine**

**Environmental Health and Safety**

TEL 646-962-7233 WEB [weill.cornell.edu/ehs](http://weill.cornell.edu/ehs) EMAIL [ehs@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ehs@med.cornell.edu)

Weill Cornell Medicine | 402 East 67th Street, Room LA-0020 | New York, NY 10065