



Life-saving Materials, Used to Treat COVID-19 Patients, Are Actually Hazmat!

For the past several months, the news has been saturated with information regarding COVID-19 and the precautions we need to take to avoid contracting this life-threatening communicable illness. We've also heard about the brave healthcare heroes working tirelessly to treat those that do end up battling the virus. However, most people aren't aware that many of the lifesaving materials that are being used to treat COVID-19 actually meet the criteria to be classified as a Hazardous Material (HazMat) when offered for transportation in commerce.

It may seem peculiar that something can be simultaneously essential to saving lives but also have its own inherent hazards. Yet that is the case with many common medical materials that are transported daily along the supply chain that gets them from their manufacturers and into the hands of doctors and nurses world-wide.

What Medical Supplies are Considered Hazmat?

Materials that meet the definition of a hazmat for transportation purposes must be properly assigned an Identification Number and Proper Shipping Name. They must also be assigned a Hazard Class/Division and assigned Subsidiary Hazards/Divisions and Packing Groups, when applicable. All of that information is then combined together to create a Hazmat Basic Description. For those of you who are not familiar with these terms, click [here](#) and [here](#) for their definitions.

First, let's start by taking a look at one of the more obvious hazardous materials involved in treating COVID-19, the "**test samples**" themselves! These are most commonly collected at a health care facility and sent to a testing lab for analysis. In order to properly transport said tests, they must be assigned the following hazmat basic description: UN 3373, [Biological substance, Category B, 6.2.](#)

Now we will discuss examples of less obvious hazmat that may be involved in the treatment of COVID-19. We will detail their possible uses and their possible hazmat descriptions below:

- **Oxygen Cylinders**- can be used to supply supplemental air to patients who are having breathing difficulties caused by the virus. These tanks contain compressed non-flammable gases, which also meets the definition of an [Oxidizer](#).
 - Identification Number- UN1072
 - Proper Shipping Name- Oxygen, compressed
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 2.2 (5.1)
 - Packing Group- N/A
- **Defibrillators**- used to restore normal heartbeats by sending an electric pulse to the heart. They can also be used to restore the heart's beating if it has suddenly stopped. Portable defibrillators contain lithium metal batteries, which are a regulated as [Class 9 Miscellaneous](#) hazmat.
 - Identification Number- UN3091
 - Proper Shipping Name- Lithium metal batteries contained in equipment
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 9
 - Packing Group- N/A
- **Thermometers**- used to monitor patients to see if there are exhibiting one of the key symptoms of COVID-19, a fever. Some thermometers contain mercury or lithium metal button cell. Mercury regulated Hazmat due to its [Corrosive](#) and [Toxic](#) properties.
 - Identification Number- UN3506
 - Proper Shipping Name- Mercury contained in manufactured articles
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 8 (6.1)
 - Packing Group- N/A



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- **First Aid Kit**- used to treat basic wounds when away from a healthcare facility. First aid kits often contain regulated hazmat such as [Flammable Solids](#) (alcohol wipes).
 - Identification Number- UN3316
 - Proper Shipping Name- First aid kits
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 9
 - Packing Group- packagings must meet Packing Group II performance standards
- **Hand Sanitizer**- used to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 due to its disinfecting properties. These often contain [Flammable Liquids](#) that are regulated for transport.
 - Identification Number- UN1987
 - Proper Shipping Name- Alcohols, n.o.s. (Ethanol)
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 3
 - Packing Group- II or III (depending on the flashpoint)
- **Rubbing Alcohol**- used to disinfect surfaces to prevent the unwanted spread of harmful organisms and to maintain a sanitized workplace. These often contain flammable liquids.
 - Identification Number- UN1219
 - Proper Shipping Name- Isopropanol
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 3
 - Packing Group- II
- **Lysol**- used as an aerosol disinfectant to prevent the unwanted spread of harmful organisms and to maintain a sanitized workplace. These are compressed flammable or non-flammable compressed gases, [Flammable Gases](#), which are Hazmat that are regulated in transportation.
 - Identification Number- UN1950
 - Proper Shipping Name- Aerosols, flammable
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 2.1
 - Packing Group- N/A
- **Nitrogen**- compressed gas that can be used in health care and laboratory settings for purging, pressure transferring, mixing and blanketing. All of which help prevent moisture intrusion, oxidation, contamination and degradation of medical and laboratory equipment. Even though Nitrogen gas is a [Non-toxic/Non-flammable Compressed Gas](#), it is still a hazmat in transportation because the cylinders are pressurized and can become a projectile and are regulated in transportation.
 - Identification Number- UN1066
 - Proper Shipping Name- Nitrogen, compressed
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 2.2
 - Packing Group- N/A
- **Solvent Cleaner Wipes**- Industrial strength disinfectant wipes that are used to clean testing laboratories and health care facilities. These wipes are a solid that has been pre-saturated in flammable liquids.
 - Identification Number- UN3295
 - Proper Shipping Name- Hydrocarbons, liquid, n.o.s. (D-Limonene, 2-Propanol)
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 3
 - Packing Group- III
- **Dry Ice**- used by health care workers as a means of temperature control for biological samples, organs, blood and other temperature sensitive materials. Dry ice is a regulated material due to its asphyxiant properties.
 - Identification Number- UN1845
 - Proper Shipping Name- Dry Ice
 - Hazard Class/Division (Subsidiary Hazard Class/Division)- 9



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- o Packing Group- N/A

As you can see hazardous material transportation is a very complex, but very necessary industry that covers many common and even life-saving materials. Due to the many intricacies and nuances of the regulations, Hazmat training is required for anyone who performs a Hazmat function (such as: preparing, shipping/offering, transporting, loading/unloading Hazmat, etc.).

Online Training – The Best Way to Ensure Regulatory Compliance

Hazmat University offers training courses in all modes of transportation (air, ground, and vessel) for both initial or recurrent hazmat training. We offer online trainings that easily allows for remote, self-paced learning that will suit you, whether you absorb information quickly or prefer to take your time. We also offer personalized instructor-led webinars.

These online training options were already considered very appealing because of their extreme convenience and cost-effective nature. However, the entire globe is now enduring the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, not just the healthcare industry, so remote training is now more important than ever. It allows individuals to stay current with regulatory requirements, while also staying in compliance with travel restrictions and social distancing requirements.