



Ground Ops Safety Alert

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT ARE CIRCULATED TO IMPROVE SAFETY CULTURE AND AWARENESS

Procedures for handling and loading in the cargo compartment of assistive devices and strollers

WHY

We are currently experiencing some issues in offloading strollers, wheelchairs, or assistive devices in general.

OVERVIEW

Assistive devices are external devices that are designed to assist a person to walk or move. The scope of these devices is to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence.

People with disabilities depend on assistive devices to enable them to carry out daily activities, or to perform a particular task.

The mobility aids may include:

- wheelchair
- Walker
- Tricycles
- Crutches
- Walking sticks /canes
- Scooter

Mobility aids and their components, as well as strollers, are very fragile.

These devices must be handled, loaded, and unloaded properly to be delivered undamaged to the customer. As it is mentioned in "DOT A Report on Stowage of Assistive Devices" at chapter 2 "Damage to Assistive Devices".

"Damage to wheelchairs or scooters is a serious concern for passengers with disabilities traveling with these devices by air. When wheelchairs or scooters are damaged, the independence of the user is impacted as the wheelchair/scooter functions as the user's legs. The damage often results in the passenger having to significantly change or even cancel plans upon arrival at his or her destination or at least until a replacement device can be secured."

You must use extreme care when handling these tools.

RECOMMENDATION

There has been an increase in reports where assistive devices and strollers were not secured correctly to prevent movement or damage.

We recommend the adoption of the following best practices that will allow for the safe and proper securement of wheelchairs and scooters in the cargo compartment of aircraft.

More specifically:

- **Where the aircraft type and loading capability permit wheelchairs should always be transported upright on wheels and restrained;**
- **Any additional baggage, cargo, or other items placed in the same ULD or in Bulk compartment must NOT be loaded on top of the fragile items.**

We want also to remind you of the instructions and guidelines stated in:

- HLM (3.2.8)

In order to prevent possible devices damage during loading, the following instructions shall be observed:

- load the devices in dedicated ULDs or compartments, separately from any other load, if weight/volume flight conditions allow it;
- load in such a way as to prevent the devices free movement and/or any other load (i.e. baggage, mail and cargo) within the ULD/hold;
- keep device upright, if possible;
- avoid unnecessary device tilting;
- disengage freewheel mode;
- secure removable and fragile parts;
- for battery-powered devices, refer to procedures described in the following paragraphs.

The devices restraint can be ensured:

- with the use of straps, avoiding to over tighten them and being careful to place them in points that are not sensitive parts easily damaged. If possible, use tie down points or device base;
- with the use of other material to be loaded. This load shall be placed only on the device sides (not on top) and its nature shall not be such as to damage the device (i.e. dangerous goods, piercing loads or loads that could potentially leak liquids).

- ITA Airways "DANGEROUS GOODS BULLETIN", issued: N°1/2023 DATE: 20-04-2023
Subject: Battery-powered Wheelchair and Mobility Aid RIF. IATA DGR 2.3.2.2 EDIT.64/2023.
"The loading and handling of battery-powered wheelchair / mobility aids must compliance with all ICAO/IATA requirements and carrier policy."

Is this an acceptable way to load mobility aids?



Your urgent attention is required in ensuring that an assistive device is properly handled during transport.

Please brief the respective teams for immediate awareness.