



Federal Aviation
Administration

Press Release – FAA Proposes \$175,000 Civil Penalty Against MIT

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Arlene Salac/Jim Peters

Phone: (718) 553-3015

BURLINGTON, Mass. – The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is proposing a \$175,000 civil penalty against the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for alleged violations of Department of Transportation Hazardous Materials Regulations.

The FAA alleges that MIT offered a fiberboard box containing 33 electronic devices to FedEx for transportation by air from Cambridge to Seattle on Aug. 25, 2009. Each electronic device consisted of a lithium battery attached to a circuit board and tube-like container.

The package was discovered with smoke and flames coming from it while it was moving on a conveyor at the FedEx sorting facility in Medford, Mass. Two of the devices in the package heated and melted, which caused the surrounding cushioning and packaging to catch fire. Because the package was not properly labeled and marked, Federal Express employees did not know the shipment contained hazardous material. They made several unsuccessful attempts to extinguish the flames with a fire extinguisher.

Specifically, the batteries were not packaged in a manner that would prevent a short-circuit that could create sparks or generate a dangerous quantity of heat.

MIT allegedly offered the box when it was not packaged, marked, classed, described, labeled or in condition for shipment as required by regulations. The airbill accompanying the shipment specifically stated the shipment did not contain dangerous goods.

In addition, the FAA alleges MIT employees were not properly trained and tested to handle hazardous material.

MIT has 30 days from receipt of the FAA's enforcement letter to respond to the agency.

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