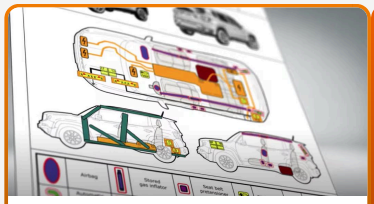

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Nearly two lithium battery fires per week on airplanes in the US alone

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The US Federal Aviation Administration is cautioning passengers about travelling with lithium-ion batteries. These batteries, found in everyday devices such as laptops, tablets, and even electric toothbrushes, pose a serious risk to flight safety if they catch fire onboard a flight in mid air.

According to new FAA data, **lithium battery fires on U.S. flights** now occur nearly **twice a week.**

In an incident last July, a laptop battery in a carry-on bag ignited on an American Airlines flight from San Francisco to Miami.

A passenger on the flight described the experience to CBS News:

"It was absolute chaos. It truly felt like every man for themselves. And it was terrifying. I didn't know if we were going to explode. All I knew was I needed to get out and survive."

CBS News also has a video with some footage from the chaos that occurred among passengers on the flight.

Lithium battery fires on flights increased almost 400 % in 10 years

According to FAA statistics, incidents of lithium battery fires on U.S. flights have surged by 388% since 2015, now happening nearly twice a week.

"Any fire at 30,000 feet is unacceptable," stated **David Wroth** of UL Standards & Engagement, an organization focused on safety research.

A survey conducted by UL with over 800 flight attendants showed that 87% are concerned about the risks posed by lithium batteries on airplanes, with more than a third feeling that airlines should do more to ensure passenger safety.

Although the FAA requires airlines to provide general safety information in preflight briefings, these warnings often omit the specific dangers associated with battery fires. **Ben Supko**, who oversees hazardous materials safety for the FAA, noted:

"It's a balance we probably need to do a better job striking with the airlines. Passengers don't fully understand how serious the risk is."

Supko recommended that passengers keep a close eye on their devices during flights and **immediately inform the crew** if a device **feels warm** or shows **signs of damage.** Additionally, passengers are advised to **not pack lithium batteries in checked luggage**, since fires in the cargo hold are more difficult to manage.

Reflecting on her experience, Patel remarked, "When you don't know what's going to happen, you act erratically. It costs us nothing just to say, 'Hey, the reason why we're so serious about this is because it could be really dangerous. It could catch fire.'"

The UL survey also revealed that **one in four passengers admits to packing lithium batteries in their checked bags,** which is an even bigger problem because of the increased challenge of extinguishing a fire in the plane's cargo area.

U.S. flights seeing more lithium battery fires, FAA data shows

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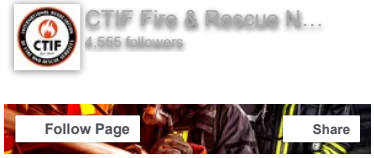

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