



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**Pipeline and Hazardous Materials  
Safety Administration**

1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

DEC 3 2010

Mr. Grant Haves  
HazMat Compliance Specialist  
Ford Motor Company  
5111 Auto Club Drive  
Dearborn, MI 48126

Ref. No.: 10-0201

Dear Mr. Haves:

This responds to your July 1, 2010 letter and subsequent email correspondence with a member of my staff requesting clarification of the Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMR; 49 CFR Parts 171-180). Specifically you ask if the exception in § 173.166(d)(1) from the HMR for air bag modules or seat-belt pretensioners installed in a motor vehicle, aircraft, boat or other transport conveyance or its completed components, extends to air bag inflators. In your email you indicate that the restraint system has two components: the airbag, which is installed in the shoulder restraint belt in the seat of a vehicle, and the inflator, which is attached to the buckle assembly in the seat. You state that when the shoulder restraint belt is securely latched in the buckle, the inflator and airbag are connected and would fall under the definition of an airbag module.

Air bag inflators, which have been previously approved, installed without an inflatable bag assembly in a transport conveyance or its completed components do not qualify for the exemptions provided in § 173.166(d)(1). If there is a method in which you can transport the shoulder restraint belt latched to the buckle to create a complete air bag assembly, then the exception provided in § 173.166(d)(1) would apply.

I trust this satisfies your inquiry. Please contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Supko", written over a horizontal line.

Ben Supko  
Acting Chief, Standards Development  
Standards and Rulemaking Division



5111 Auto Club Drive, Dearborn, MI 48126

Winter  
§ 173.166  
§ 172.101  
Air Bag Module Exception  
10-0201

July 1, 2010

Office of Hazardous Materials Standards  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration  
Attn: PHH-10  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
East Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590-0001

**Subject: Letter of Interpretation request for shipment of air bag inflators installed in completed components.**

I am writing to request a formal letter of interpretation regarding the applicability of 49 CFR 173.166(d)(1) for shipments of air bag inflators approved by the Associate Administrator when installed in a transport conveyance or its completed component.

The wording of 49 CFR 173.166(d)(1) appears to exclude air bag inflators from this exception, however the 15th and 16th editions of the UN Model Regulations include air bag inflators in SP 289:

*"Air bag inflators, air bag modules or seat-belt pretensioners installed in conveyances or in completed conveyance components such as steering columns, door panels, seats, etc. are not subject to these Regulations."*

Also, since the HMT (172.101) listings the three shipping names "Air bag inflators or Air bag modules or Seat-belt pretensioners" under the same entry it would indicate that these three articles are considered to present the same hazard in transportation.

Therefore, I am seeking clarification on the applicability of the exception found in 173.166(d)(1) to a shipment of an approved air bag inflator when installed in a transport conveyance or its completed components.

Please feel free to contact me if you require additional information. I can be reached by email at [ghaves@ford.com](mailto:ghaves@ford.com) or by phone at (313)845-8762.

Regards,

Grant Hayes  
HazMat Compliance Specialist  
Ford Motor Company  
5111 Auto Club Drive,  
Dearborn, MI 48126

**From:** Haves, Grant (G.) [mailto:ghaves@ford.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 24, 2010 10:37 AM  
**To:** Winter, Lisa (PHMSA)  
**Subject:** RE: Your Interpretation Request of the Application of 49 CFR 173.166(d)(1)

Lisa,

This is a unique situation and a 'new' design for a passenger restraint system. This restraint system has two components. One is the airbag which is installed in the shoulder restraint belt in the back seat of a vehicle. The other component is the inflator which is attached to the buckle assembly in the seat. Therefore when the shoulder restraint belt is securely latched in the buckle the inflator and airbag are connected and would clearly fall under the definition of an airbag module. However the issue becomes when the shoulder restraint belt is not attached/latched to the buckle assembly. In this case it does not meet the definition of an airbag module since they are in two separate components. Basically if a passenger is in the seat with his/her seat belt attached it would meet the definition of an airbag module. However if the seat is unoccupied by a passenger and the seatbelt is not latched then the inflator is installed in a finished component (seat assembly) but is not considered an airbag module because the airbag itself, the belt, is not attached.

Therefore we require clarification on the applicability of 173.166(d)(1) to the situation where the belt (airbag) is not latched to the buckle (inflator) in an installed component. There is no additional risk associated with this scenario but based on the wording of 173.166(d)(1) it appears to exclude installed airbag inflators, however the UN model regulations specifically includes inflators in the exception.

Hope this helps, and if you require additional information please let me know.

*Grant Haves*

Ford Motor Company  
Material Planning & Logistics  
Dangerous Goods Compliance Specialist  
Phone - (313)845-8762  
Fax - (313)337-3779  
HazMat Website - <https://comm.sp.ford.com/sites/hazmatweb/Pages/na.aspx>

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**From:** lisa.winter@dot.gov [mailto:lisa.winter@dot.gov]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 23, 2010 2:58 PM  
**To:** Haves, Grant (G.)  
**Subject:** Your Interpretation Request of the Application of 49 CFR 173.166(d)(1)

Dear Mr. Haves:

In our effort to reply to your request for clarification of the application of 49 CFR 173.166(d)(1), I was hoping that you could answer a couple of questions regarding the involved air bag inflators installed in a motor vehicle, aircraft, boat or other transport conveyance, or its completed components, so that I can have a better understanding of your particular situation. My questions are as follows:

- 1.) Is the inflator installed without the inflatable bag assembly?
- 2.) If so, please will you provide examples of what transport conveyance or component would be equipped with just the inflator and not the entire module?