

Prohibited and Restricted Items Workbook 2024

Introduction

The current situation

Getting it right every time is as much about safety as it is about our customers. Each month 100 branches are tested during mystery shopper visits and the results are shared with Post Office and Royal Mail.

Prohibited and Restricted remains a big issue with mystery shopper results continuing to decline resulting in potentially dangerous items entering Royal Mail's network.

What are the specific issues?

Mystery shopper visits have identified a number of common issues when it comes to branches and the Dangerous Goods process:

- In many cases the question "For the purpose of safety, please can you tell me what's inside?" is not being asked at all
- In cases where the question has been asked, goods are then not being correctly identified as either prohibited or restricted leading to incorrect options being selected on Horizon
- Where a customer has provided an answer which does not fully identify the item(s), further clarifying questions are not being asked to determine the exact contents
- Horizon prompts are not being read which also leads to incorrect options being selected on Horizon
- Restricted items labels are not being applied when prompted by Horizon
- Letter and Large letter items containing goods are being omitted from the dangerous goods process

Why is it important to follow the process correctly?

Due to transport regulations, there are hazardous items that Royal Mail and Parcelforce Worldwide cannot transport (prohibited items) and others that can be transported but with specific limitations applied (restricted items).

We need to be getting this right, for safety and for our customers. By following the correct process when accepting mail from a customer, you can ensure that your customers' mail arrives safely at the intended destination without delay.

Your customers do not always have your expertise and they rely on you to help them post their items the right way, avoiding delays and disappointments. This will improve customer service and reduce complaints.

Did you know?

If you fail to ask the questions and the parcel or letter contains items that are prohibited or restricted, these items could be returned to the sender or destroyed by Royal Mail. This will cause additional cost and inconvenience for your customer, diminish their trust in your ability and have a negative impact on the brand.

Objective

By the end of this workbook you will be able to recall the correct processes to follow to ensure that Prohibited and Restricted guidelines are followed. To achieve this we will cover:

- What are Dangerous Goods? - Page 4
- Three simple steps to complete the Dangerous Goods process - Page 5 - 6
- What to do if a parcel contains a prohibited item - page 6
- Batteries simplified - page 7
- Restricted item labels - page 8
- Helping customers to understand - page 9
- Good housekeeping - page 9
- Taking the compliance test - page 10

Additional course materials

To provide further support there are additional materials available as part of this course:

- Prohibited and Restricted Reference Guide - available to view in the Compliance Workbooks section on Horizon Help, and to view/download/print on branch Hub
- Batteries Simplified work aid - available on page 7 of this workbook, and to view/download/print on Branch Hub

Please note: If you do not complete and pass the training within the required time-frame, your Smart ID will be restricted, and you will not be able to sell any Mails products through Horizon. This workbook, the Reference Guide and work aids are also available in PDF format to read and print off. Go to Branch Hub and click the 'Training' tile <https://branchhub.postoffice.co.uk/bh>

What are Dangerous Goods?

Dangerous Goods are articles or substances which pose a hazard to health, safety, property or to the environment when transported.

Many everyday items, such as aerosols, nail varnish and perfumes are considered dangerous goods under transport legislation. Dangerous Goods are either Prohibited or Restricted.

Prohibited or Restricted - what is the difference?

Prohibited

Prohibited items are items which cannot be transported for legal or health and safety reasons.

For example:

- Lithium batteries sent without an electronic device
- Power banks
- Party poppers
- Any aerosol that is not a toiletry or medicinal
- Lighters and refills containing flammable liquid

You must not accept a Prohibited item under any circumstances.

Restricted

Restricted items are items classed as dangerous goods, which can be transported subject to strict restrictions. For example:

- Alcoholic drinks
- Nail polish
- Perfumes and aftershaves
- Toiletry and medicinal aerosols

You can accept a restricted item provided it meets the quantity, volume, and packaging requirements.

How do you know if an item is prohibited or restricted?

There are a number of resources available in branch that will help you to determine if an item is classed as Dangerous Goods, and if so, whether it is prohibited or restricted:

- Horizon Help - for inland and international prohibitions and restrictions
- Prohibited & Restricted leaflet
- Dangerous Goods laminate (UK one side, International the other side)

Plane, rail or road?

When posting mail to inland destinations, we mean all of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) including Channel Islands and Isle of Man. Not all UK destinations are linked by rail or road, so other modes of transport are used. Prohibitions and restrictions apply to all modes of transport, which means that every time you process an item that a customer is paying to send you need to ask:

“For the purpose of safety, please can you tell me what’s inside?”

Inland or international?

Whether items are prohibited or restricted differs slightly depending on whether they are being sent within the UK or internationally, but the process is the same. The Dangerous Goods laminate covers the UK on one side and international on the other and can be referred to when completing the Dangerous Goods process for inland and international items. Check on Horizon Help for individual country restrictions.

Three simple steps

The first question of the 5Ws conversation asks 'Where is it going?' to determine if the item is being sent to an inland or international destination. The Dangerous Goods process is then completed in three simple steps: **Ask**, **Clarify** and **Follow Horizon prompts**.

1. Ask: For the purpose of safety, please can you tell me what's inside?

This is the second question of the 5Ws conversation and is asked every time a customer is posting any item.

Scenario: When you asked 'what's inside?' your customer replied 'none of your business'.

How you ask the question really does matter. Many customers don't understand why you are asking and can be offended. Ask the question in full, it explains that you are asking for safety reasons.

2. Clarify: Are you confident about the parcel's contents?

If your customer's initial response does not provide a clear answer, you should ask more questions until you are confident about the parcel's contents. Mystery shoppers will provide an initial response to prompt a clarifying question, and results have shown that on average 30% of branches fail because they did not ask clarification questions.

Some restricted items contain limits on the volume and quantity and Horizon will prompt you to verify these with your customer. For example, when an item is identified as perfume, Horizon prompts will ask you to confirm with the customer that it is under 150ml in volume, there are no more than four bottles in the parcel, in their original retail packaging, placed in strong outer packaging and cushioned to prevent breakage, and with the senders name and address visible on the parcel.

Scenario: In response to your initial safety question a customer tells you they are posting a toiletry gift set to their niece. You continue to process the parcel and ask no further questions. Have you done enough to complete the Dangerous Goods process?

No, you should have asked further open questions to clarify what is in the gift set, for example "can you tell me specifically what's inside the gift set please?". Many gift sets contain items such as perfume, aerosols and nail varnish which require specific responses to Horizon prompts and an ID8000 label to be applied to the parcel. If this question is not asked then you are skipping past the prompts and missing important instruction.

Please ensure that all parcels have the sender's name and address clearly marked on the back.

3. Follow Horizon prompts, and select correct options, then apply label if applicable.

Do you have enough information to complete this step?

Throughout the Dangerous Goods process on Horizon you are required to read all prompts and select the correct options based on the contents of the parcel. You have the Dangerous Goods laminate, Horizon Help and the Prohibited and Restricted leaflet to help you if you require further information about specific items.

It is impossible to select the correct options if you have not completed the first two stages, Ask and Clarify.

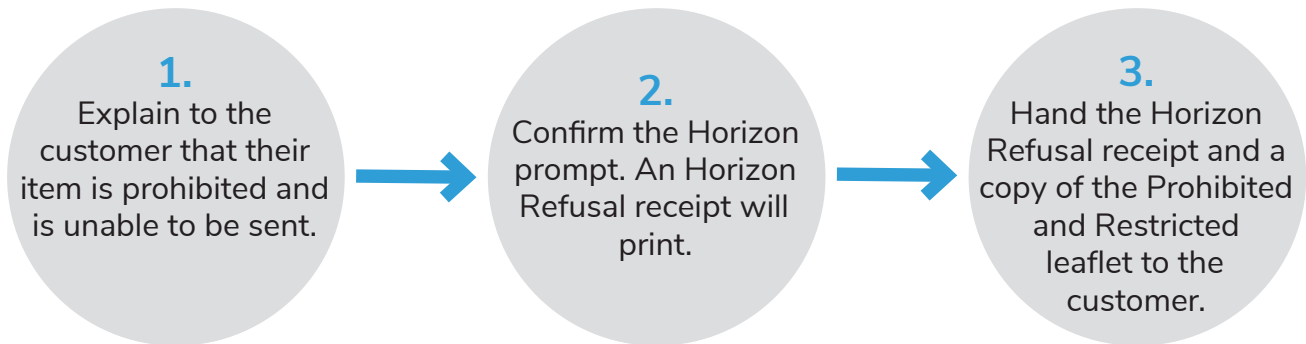
Scenario: Your customer is posting a digital camera with the battery in the parcel but not connected to the camera, to an inland destination.

Read the prompts carefully as you process the item. Horizon will ask questions to determine if the item can be sent and will then prompt you to apply a label to the item if required. Keep the Batteries Simplified Work Aid to hand, it is a useful guide to demonstrate you are getting it right for your customer.

Three simple steps (continued)

What if a parcel contains a prohibited item?

When you identify that a customer’s parcel contains a prohibited item it is important that you communicate this clearly with them. Once you select the Prohibited option on Horizon a prompt will appear to confirm the next steps:



Scenario: A customer is confused and disappointed that they have been told their item cannot be sent. The assistant refused to accept the parcel and told them it was dangerous, with no further explanation.

The customer has not understood why their item cannot be sent as the assistant has not followed the process correctly. It is part of the transaction to ensure the customer is fully informed of the reason why their item cannot be sent and provided with the Horizon Refusal receipt and a copy of the Prohibited and Restricted leaflet. Even if an item is identified as prohibited before anything has been entered onto Horizon, select the 'DG' button from the Front Office Home Screen and complete the Dangerous Goods process so that the customer can be handed the Horizon Refusal receipt and Prohibited and Restricted leaflet.

Batteries simplified

There are many different types of batteries and it can be confusing trying to determine whether a particular type of battery can be posted or not. The **'Batteries Simplified'** Work Aid is designed to make it easy to identify different types of battery and to know what the prohibitions or restrictions are for each type. Batteries Simplified is shown below and the Work Aid is available on Branch Hub for you to print or download.

Battery type	UK	Int.	Label
 <p>Regular AAA and AA batteries (cells) are fine provided they do not contain lithium.</p> <p>New and in their original packaging, cushioned e.g. with bubble wrap.</p>	✓	✓	✗
 <p>Lithium* battery on its own</p> <p>It is strictly prohibited to send any type of lithium* battery on its own.</p> <p>For example: Power banks, laptop batteries, AA/AAA lithium batteries.</p> <p>*including lithium-ion or lithium-polymer batteries.</p>	✗	✗	✗
 <p>Lithium battery in device</p> <p>(commonly found in phones, tablets, game controllers) - no more than two batteries in the device.</p> <p>Most newer model phones have integrated lithium batteries.</p> <p>(Battery in the device = no label required).</p>	✓	✓	✗
 <p>Lithium battery not in the device, but sent with it</p> <p>(Camera, laptop, power tool) - the number of batteries required to power the device plus two spares.</p> <p>These items tend to be well packaged as they are so expensive, adding to their safety in transit.</p> <p>(Battery with (not in) the device = lithium battery label is required).</p>	✓	✗	✓

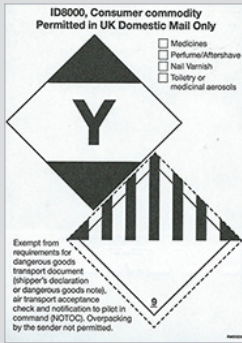
Remember:

- Please refer to the Royal Mail Prohibited & Restricted items leaflet for full details of different battery types
- Remember to check Horizon Help for individual country restrictions
- Read (don't skip) the Horizon prompts, they tell you what to do in each circumstance, so you don't have to memorise this



Restricted items labels

These labels are applied to inland parcels containing restricted items. Horizon will prompt you during the transaction to apply the correct one. It is a good idea to keep a supply of restricted items labels with your postage/service labels .



ID8000 label

- Applied to items that contain any of the following items: medicines, perfumes/aftershaves, nail varnish, toiletry or medicinal aerosols
- Horizon will prompt you when you need to apply the label
- Tick the relevant box on the label and apply to the front of the item



Lithium Ion/Metal Battery label

- Applied to items containing **lithium batteries that are being sent with equipment** (not installed or connected to the device) within the UK
- If the label is not applied when prompted by Horizon, and the item is posted without the label, the item may be disposed of by Royal Mail

If a customer brings in an item that already has an ID8000 label or Lithium Ion/Metal Battery label attached, check with the customer what the item contains and if it doesn't contain dangerous goods, remove the label.

Parcels with ID8000 labels or Lithium battery handling labels should never be sent to international destinations.

Scenario: You have asked your customer 'for the purpose of safety, please can you tell me what's inside?' and they have replied 'a cordless power drill'. You feel confident that this item is not prohibited or restricted and have selected 'Not restricted', before continuing with the transaction. What is wrong here?

No clarifying questions have been asked to determine if the power drill contains a lithium battery, either in the power drill or with the power drill. If there is battery with the power drill (but not connected to it), a Lithium Ion/Metal Battery label should have been applied. How will the customer feel if they find out their item has been disposed of because you didn't ask further questions?

Mystery Shop results have highlighted that clarifying questions are not being asked to find out if the battery is 'in' the device (does not require a Lithium Ion/Metal Battery label) or is 'with' the device (Lithium Ion/Metal Battery label is to be applied). This will enable you to follow the Horizon Prompts and complete the required actions as instructed. It will also help to clear up any confusion you have when dealing with batteries.



Battery in/connected to the device/equipment = no label required

Battery being sent with (not in) the device/equipment = Lithium Ion/Metal Battery label is required



Helping customers to understand

Our customers do not always understand the reasons why some items can be sent with Royal Mail and some cannot. There are some simple steps you can take to ensure that a customer feels fully informed, regardless of whether their item is restricted or prohibited:

Always ask 'For the purpose of safety, please can you tell me what's inside?'

Ask the question in full to every customer, so that it is clear you are asking for safety reasons

Be consistent

Customers should receive the same high standards whoever serves them or whichever branch they go to.

If they are asked the questions in one branch but not in another they will have no trust that the process is required.

Clarify the contents

If you are not 100% sure of what items a customer is sending, ask further questions and confirm back to them.

If a customer wants to know why it needs to be specific, explain that it is for safety reasons, to prevent hazardous items entering the mail network.

Apply the correct label as instructed

If an item requires a label to be attached ensure you apply the correct label as soon as you are instructed to do so.

For ID8000 labels ensure you have ticked the relevant box to indicate the contents.

Good housekeeping

Ensure you have the correct posters, leaflets and labels available:

- Have the latest version of the Prohibited and Restricted leaflet available for customers and keep a copy at the counter for you to refer to when you need it
- Have a stock of Lithium battery labels and ID8000 labels to hand at the counter ready to apply to items when instructed by Horizon
- Ensure the Dangerous Goods laminate is available at every counter position
- If you have an unmanned parcel hatch, please display the correct Prohibited and Restricted items poster (RMDG27)

Scenario: A regular customer is posting a parcel but there is a queue building and you can tell your customer is in a rush. You miss out the safety question to speed up the transaction as you don't want to upset a regular customer by keeping them any longer. It's good customer service to get them served quickly, right?

On the surface it might appear that you are helping your customers by doing this, but you are not. If you accept an item that is prohibited, place it into the mail system and as a consequence it is destroyed by Royal Mail, what will your regular customer think then? Will they still be a regular customer? Don't confuse speed with efficiency. Skipping vital steps in the dangerous goods process might seem quicker, but is not efficient, it is not compliant and it could be dangerous.

Taking the compliance test

Now that you have read through this workbook you are equipped with the knowledge to complete your Prohibited and Restricted Items Compliance test. The pass mark is 100% and you can have as many attempts as you need to achieve this result.

Successful completion of the test will confirm you understand your key responsibilities in relation to the prohibited and restricted items process.

Completing the test on Horizon

Your individual Smart ID is linked to your training records. If you don't complete the training and pass the test within the time frame it is available on Horizon, you will not be able to process mail items on Horizon. Once you have logged onto Horizon, follow the steps below.

From the Home Screen, select:

- [F5] Licences and Government
- [F2] Compliance
- [22] Compliance Tests
- Select 'Prohibited and Restricted Items'

Follow the on-screen instructions to complete the test

1. Confirm that you are the correct user ID displayed on Horizon.
2. Confirm that what you are about to perform, is the 'Prohibited and Restricted Items' compliance test in accordance with the associated course
3. Enter your surname, forename, initial(s) and select title
4. Select the correct Position in Branch button, before continuing with the test. (If you are in charge and the Postmaster is absent, please press the 'Officer in Charge' button)

If any staff are absent during the test window, they have to complete the training and take the test before resuming work.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you and all your staff (including any temporary or holiday relief staff), have completed the course and passed the test themselves. You also need to ensure that any new staff who join during the next 12 months receive the training and pass the test before commencing their duties.

Further support or advice

If you have any questions or need further support, there are many resources available to you:

1. If you have any questions about the training, or need further support, contact the Branch Support Centre
2. For further information on the prohibited and restricted process, please refer to the Prohibited and Restricted Reference Guide and work aids which are available in PDF format to read and print off from Branch Hub, click on the 'Training' tile, or visit Horizon Help
3. There are some frequently asked questions (FAQs) within Horizon Help