**Who Regulates Hazardous Material Shipments?**

In the environmental and safety world, it’s pretty simple to determine who’s the regulatory authority. For safety, in most cases it’s OSHA, and if you’re in a “state plan” state or if you’re a public entity, your state has an additional safety regulatory agency. For environmental issues, it’s EPA and for many states there is an additional state agency which covers environmental regulations plus you have municipal environmental rules. However, when it comes to shipping hazardous materials, it gets a little more complicated.

In the U.S., the shipment of hazardous materials is covered by federal regulation 49 CFR. 49 CFR addresses the shipment of hazardous materials by ground, air and vessel. The Department of Transportation ([DOT](https://www.transportation.gov/)) is responsible for enforcing 49 CFR.

DOT contains a variety of agencies which are responsible for ensuring specific parts of 49 CFR are being followed:

* Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Security Administration ([PHMSA](https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/));
* Federal Aviation Administration ([FAA](https://www.faa.gov/));
* Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration ([FMCSA](https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/)); and,
* Federal Railroad Administration ([FRA](https://railroads.dot.gov/)).

In addition to the federal agencies, there are additional state agencies with the authority to enforce DOT regulations. For example, this could be your state’s department of transportation and additional agencies which govern the highway patrol, rail lines or pipelines. Thus, you could receive inspections from a variety of state officials and highway patrol in additional to the federal agencies.

If there was one arm of DOT which takes the lead in hazardous materials, it’s PHMSA. PHMSA’s focus is safe shipments and it creates and publicizes regulations. Thus, if you wanted to learn new information about shipping hazardous materials, start with PHMSA.

When it comes to air and vessel shipments, you’ll find that although 49 CFR has rules regarding these types of shipments, in parts, 49 CFR defers to two other agencies, the International Air Transport Association ([IATA](https://www.iata.org/pages/default.aspx)) and the [International Maritime Organization](http://www.imo.org/) who publishes the International Dangerous Goods Code (IMDG). These are international organizations, as the shipment of hazardous materials will often cross country boundaries via ocean or air. Thus, when you’re required to have training, you need the training of both 49 CFR and IATA or IMDG. IMDG can also be applicable to shipments within in the U.S. when shipping to Hawaii, Alaska or Puerto Rico.

Radioactive materials shipments are regulated under the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission ([NRC](https://www.nrc.gov/)).

Both OSHA and EPA mention and defer to DOT within its regulations. Thus, you need to be aware AND trained in both the regulations of OSHA/EPA and DOT when dealing with environmental or safety issues.

49 CFR regulations can become very confusing. If you need help determining which regulations apply to you and how you need to ship your hazardous materials, [contact us](https://isienvironmental.com/index.php/contact-us/) and we’d be happy to help!