



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

# InFO

Information for Operators

InFO 09018  
DATE: 11/12/09

Flight Standards Service  
Washington, DC

**[http://www.faa.gov/other\\_visit/aviation\\_industry/airline\\_operators/airline\\_safety/info](http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/info)**

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*An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements with relatively low urgency or impact on safety.*

**Subject:** Stowage of Items in Seat Pockets

**Purpose:** To clarify guidance for air carriers about the stowage of items in seat pockets.

**Discussion:** Existing Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) policy in FAA Order 8900.1, Volume 3, Chapter 33, Section 6, Operations—Cabin Safety, states that carry-on baggage programs should ...”Prohibit the stowage of carry-on baggage and other items in the lavatories and seat back pockets (the only items allowed in seat back pockets should be magazines and passenger information cards)...”

The intent of the carry-on baggage regulation, Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 121, § 121.589, is to prevent carry-on items from slowing an emergency evacuation and to prevent injury to passengers by ensuring items are properly restrained. Seat pockets have been designed to restrain approximately 3 pounds of weight and not the weight of additional carry-on items. Seat pockets are not listed in the regulation as an approved stowage location for carry-on baggage. If a seat pocket fails to restrain its contents, the contents of the seat pocket may impede emergency evacuation or may strike and injure a passenger.

If small, lightweight items, such as eyeglasses or a cell phone, can be placed in the seat pocket without exceeding the total designed weight limitation of the seat pocket or so that the seat pocket does not block anyone from evacuating the row of seats, it may be safe to do so.

The requirements of the carry-on baggage regulation are applicable to take-off and landing. Nothing in the carry-on baggage regulation prohibits a passenger from taking out small personal items from an approved stowage location and placing them in the seat pocket after takeoff and stowing them in approved locations prior to landing. Crewmembers may still direct a passenger to stow carry-on items in an approved stowage location, during flight should they pose a hazard, such as in the case of turbulence.

**Recommended Action:** Directors of safety and directors of operations should review their approved programs to ensure they consider the hazard presented by stowing items in seat pockets and the programs appropriately mitigate the associated risks. Training managers and crewmembers should be aware of the risk mitigations developed by the air carrier. An air carrier has the responsibility to identify proper risk mitigations and train its personnel appropriately; and the authority to enforce the risk mitigations it develops.

**Point of Contact:** Any questions regarding this InFO should be directed to the Part 121 Air Carrier Operations Branch, AFS-220 at (202) 267-8166.