



Maritime &  
Coastguard  
Agency

## MARINE GUIDANCE NOTE

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# MGN 698 (M)

# The Carriage of Military and Commercial Explosives

Notice to all Operators, Shipowners, Agents, Charterers, Managers, Masters, Ship's Officers, Cargo Packers, Cargo Consolidators, Consignors, Hauliers, Freight Forwarders, Shippers, Port Authorities, Maritime Administrations, Terminal Operators, and other parties involved in the transportation of military and commercial explosives by sea.

This notice should be read with the Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Harmful Substances) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.

MSN 1706 (M) and MSN 1706 Amendment 1(M) are revoked.

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## Summary

This Marine Guidance Note (MGN) provides guidance to clarify the conditions for carrying military explosives, stating when a Government Authorised Explosives Representative (GAER) is required, supplementing the provisions of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 To transport dangerous goods meeting the description of Chapter 2.1 of the IMDG Code for Class 1 (explosives), they must be classified in accordance with the UN Manual of Tests and Criteria<sup>1</sup>.

1.2 Prior to transport, the classification of all explosive substances and articles, together with the compatibility group assignment and the Proper Shipping Name under which the substance or article is to be transported, shall have been approved by the competent authority of the country of manufacture.

1.3 The Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulations 2009<sup>2</sup> describe the role of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the Competent Authority for Great Britain and explains the security and carriage responsibilities for the transport of explosives.

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<sup>1</sup> [UN Manual of Tests and Criteria](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulations 2009](#)

1.4 Military explosives<sup>3</sup> as defined at paragraph 1.1 of Annex A of this document are classified by the Secretary of State for Defence, devolved to The Defence Ordnance, Munitions and Explosives Safety Regulator (DOSR). All other explosives, including military munitions that do not meet the definition of military explosives as defined at paragraph 1.1 of Annex A, are either classified by the HSE or the Competent Authority in the IMDG Code. Certain specific provisions detailed in Annex A apply solely to military explosives.

## **2. The Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Harmful Substances) (Amendment) Regulations 2024**

2.1 The Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Harmful Substances) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (“the 2024 Regulations”) entered into force on 11 June 2024, substantially replacing the Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods and Marine Pollutants) Regulations 1997.

2.2 The 2024 Regulations implement the requirements for the carriage of dangerous goods and harmful substances in packaged form, giving effect to the IMDG Code. The IMDG Code sets out in detail the requirements applicable to each individual substance, material, or article, providing instruction on classification, consignment and carriage including packing, stowage, labelling and the segregation of incompatible substances transported by sea.

## **3. Government Authorised Explosives Representative (GAER)**

3.1 The GAER is a member of the Armed Forces, or a Civil Servant appointed by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and is required for the loading and unloading of military explosives to a vessel and has overall responsibility for ensuring that all military explosives are received and despatched to and from the port. The GAER understands the hazards and risks from the different military explosive natures and is present to ensure correct procedures are adhered to during the handling and stowage of military explosives. Appendix 1 to Annex A lists the duties of the GAER.

3.2 The GAER should liaise with the port prior to the arrival of the military explosives, so all those involved are aware of the plans for the handling and stowage of the military explosives.

### **More information**

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<sup>3</sup> [The Classification and Labelling of Explosives Regulations 1983](#)

Please note that all addresses and telephone numbers are correct at time of publishing.

Published: May 2024

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## **ANNEX A**

### **MILITARY EXPLOSIVES - MINISTRY OF DEFENCE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 "Military explosives" means any Class 1 goods:

- (a) under the control of the Secretary of State for Defence;
- (b) held for the service of the Crown for the purposes of the Ministry of Defence (MoD)
- (c) under the control of one of the armed forces; or
- (d) the carriage of which is certified by the Secretary of State for Defence to be in connection with the execution of a contract with the Secretary of State for Defence or with one of the armed forces

1.2 The movement of military explosives is subject to the conditions set out hereunder, in addition to the requirements of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code.

#### **2. Mixed Loading of Military and Commercial Explosives of Class 1**

2.1 Except in the case of loading or unloading roll-on, roll-off (ro-ro) traffic where lifting or handling of the explosives does not occur, military and commercial explosives should not be present at the same time at a berth or bay alongside a vessel during loading and unloading operations.

2.2 Military and commercial explosives should not be loaded or unloaded simultaneously into or from the same vessel.

#### **3. Government Authorised Explosives Representative**

3.1 A Government Authorised Explosives Representative (GAER) should be in attendance during the loading, handling, and discharge of military explosives at any harbour area<sup>4</sup> within the UK in ports which are authorised to handle explosives, except as shown in 3.3, 3.5 and 3.6 below.

3.2 Table 1 identifies the nature and maximum quantity of ammunition and explosives that may be present within the harbour area, without the expectation for the physical attendance of the GAER. When this is applied within the UK the harbour authority will manage the explosives safety requirements and the consignor will be available to provide support to the harbour authority and vessel operator, if required.

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<sup>4</sup> [The Dangerous Goods in Harbour Areas Regulations 2016 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

3.3 Table 1, maximum quantity of military explosives before a GAER is required:

Nature	NEM (Net Explosives Mass)	Remarks
<b>Loose Packages and Pallets</b>		
Hazard Division (HD) 1.4	Unlimited	All Compatibility Groups (CG)
Articles for lifesaving	50 kg or less	HD 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3
Articles of CG, B, C, D, E, G or N	50 kg or less	HD 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3
<b>Closed Cargo Transport Unit (CTU) for Class 1</b>		
HD 1.4	Unlimited	All CGs
HD 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3	250 kg or less	All CGs

3.4 Table 2 identifies the nature and quantity of ammunition and explosives carried on a road transport unit that may be driven on and off a ro-ro vessel by the vehicle driver, without the expectation for the physical attendance of a GAER. When this is applied within the UK, the harbour authority will arrange the military explosives safety requirements and the consignor will be available to provide support to the harbour authority and vessel operator, if required.

3.5 Table 2, GAER exception for accompanied road transport units on ro-ro vessels:

Nature	NEM	Remarks
<b>Accompanied Road Transport Unit on Ro-Ro Vessel</b>		
UN Class 1	Unlimited	All CGs except A and L

3.6 There is no expectation for a GAER to be present during the loading or unloading of military explosives that are part of the weapon systems or safety systems of a ship under the control of the Armed Forces.

3.7 Dangerous Goods in Harbour Areas Regulations 2016<sup>5</sup> (DGHAR) disappplies any dangerous goods on a vessel that are part of the equipment or stores of that vessel or is for safety purposes of the vessel. The MoD will require qualified and competent personnel both on the vessel and shoreside to supervise the loading and unloading of explosives for warships to ensure this is completed safely.

3.8 The outline duties of the GAER are detailed in Appendix 1 to this Annex. The duties essentially are to render advice to the master of the vessel or the harbour authority regarding the handling and stowage of military explosives and to bring to their notice any breaches of regulations or good safety practices.

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<sup>5</sup> The Dangerous Goods in Harbour Areas Regulations 2016

**APPENDIX 1 TO ANNEX A  
DUTIES OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORISED EXPLOSIVES  
REPRESENTATIVE**

1. The Government Authorised Explosives Representative (GAER) is to ensure the movement of military explosives is carried out safely and in accordance with relevant and appropriate regulations. They are responsible for bringing immediately to the attention of the Harbour Master and/or the Service Authority concerned any unsafe practices or violations of the regulations they may observe or have brought to their attention.
  
2. **GAER specific requirements.** The GAER shall:
  - (a) liaise with the Harbour Master to pre-plan the move prior to commencement.
  - (b) check the stowage arrangements and ensure adequate segregation measures are in place.
  - (c) ensure they are available and/or contactable for the duration of the military explosives transiting the harbour.
  - (d) ensure that the firefighting arrangements at the harbour meet the statutory requirements.
  - (e) check that the harbour has adequate emergency plans in place.
  - (f) for loose packaged and palleted consignments:
    - i) ensure that packages and overpacks containing military explosives have hazard labels, marks and documentation in accordance with the requirements of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code.
    - ii) in the event of any packages being damaged or found with a broken seal, the GAER will advise the harbour master on appropriate action to take.
    - iii) when any explosives articles or substances (including ammunition) have been observed to; or have been reported to; have deteriorated or be in an unsafe state (e.g., a dropped fused article) then the harbour master is to be informed immediately. The GAER shall then advise the harbour master as to what further action is to be taken.
  - (g) for consignments contained in any Cargo Transport Unit (CTU):
    - i) ensure any CTU marking, placarding and documentation conforms to the requirements of the IMDG Code.
  - (h) if any concerns are raised during the movement of military explosives, which require the attention of the Harbour Master and/or the Service Authority, these should be reported to the relevant regulatory body.