UN/SCETDG/19/INF.11

Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
(Nineteenth session,
2-6 July 2001, agenda item 6)

Infectious Substances

Transmitted by the Expert from Canada

Introduction

1. At the 21st Session of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, Canada proposed (ST/SG/AC.10/2000/32) that a review of the requirements in the Model Regulations for the transport of infectious substances be undertaken in this biennium.

2. The Committee agreed to add this review to the work plan for the next biennium and, at the same time, tasked Canada with coordinating the work (ST/SG/AC.10/27).

Discussions

1. Since the 21st Session, the expert from Canada has participated in meetings and panel discussions related to infectious substances. Various organizations and individuals have expressed their views regarding the problems that they believe exist in transporting infectious substances whether or not there is compliance with the Model Regulations. Some have recommended possible solutions. Other groups have asked to be advised of developments.

2. The following are problems that were most often mentioned in discussions:

   - the current requirements in the Model Regulations are unclear, unnecessarily complex and, as a result, lead to difficulties in compliance and enforcement,
   - there is a lack of guidance for consignors and competent authorities in determining what is regulated and what is not,
   - there are requirements in the Model Regulations that seem to be directed to inferred hazard rather than known hazard.

3. The following are recommendations that were most often mentioned in discussions:

- clarify the wording of the requirements to make them more understandable, less complex and easier to comply with and include all or most of the requirements, to the extent possible, in one place in the Model Regulations,

- clarify what is regulated and what is not and include classification criteria that would involve packing groups rather than risk groups,

- develop a sample list of regulated substances to guide consignors and competent authorities in classifying substances and develop a guide for consignors and competent authorities on how to use the classification criteria and sample list, which would be especially useful for "new" or "unknown" micro-organisms

- review packaging requirements for low-risk infectious substances,

- review some of the requirements in the Model Regulations outside of Chapter 2.6 to determine if they should be amended, retained as they are or deleted.

Conclusion

Some preliminary review of the recommendations has begun. Members are requested to take note of the above and are invited to contact the expert from Canada to assist in advancing the work.

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