

EXPLOSIVES HAZARDS

Fact Sheet No 15: Classification.

The Classification and Labelling of Explosives Regulations 1983 (CLER) require that all explosives transported, stored or supplied in the United Kingdom are classified by the Competent Authority. In the case of commercial explosives this is the HSE and for military explosives, ie those under the control of the MoD, it is the MoD ESTC.

Classification involves applying the UN scheme for transport of dangerous goods, as described in what is commonly referred to as the "Orange Book", to explosives manufactured or imported in the UK. Each individually named explosive article or substance is allocated a UN Number and a corresponding hazard division and compatibility group.

The UN scheme, which is recognised globally as the system for international transport, places dangerous goods into 9 classes with explosives being in Class 1. Within Class 1 there are divisions, the first four of which place the explosives in order of descending hazard, ie from 1.1 (high) to 1.4 (low). Explosives of 1.4 are then further subdivided it into 1.4 and 1.4S. In the case of the latter the effect should be so minor as to be contained within the package. There are two further divisions, 1.5 and 1.6, to cover very insensitive substances and articles, but to date no commercial explosives have been placed in these categories.

Classification is an important, core legal control that must be correctly applied. It is used in determining conditions for transport, security and movements of explosives through ports. It also provides an important source of information in determining hazards in manufacture and storage – see Fact Sheet No 11 on Hazard Type (HT). Classification and HT are related but may differ since the transport packaging can influence classification.

Information on the classification of all UK commercial explosives can now be found on the CBI EIG website (www.eig.org.uk), under the LOCEF database, following a partnership arrangement between the HSE and the CBI Explosives Industry Group.