

The Classification of Fireworks

Fireworks are classified as “explosive” for transportation purposes, under regulations of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), because of the chemical compositions contained in fireworks devices. Other Federal agencies use the DOT system and definitions in their regulations affecting the fireworks industry.

In December 1991, the U.S. Department of Transportation revised its Hazardous Materials Regulations based on the U.N. Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. Under the current DOT classification system, "explosives" are classed into six divisions. Fireworks fall into two of the six divisions:

<i>Current Classification</i>	<i>Class Name, Prior to January 1, 1991.</i>
Division 1.1	Class A Explosives
Division 1.2	Class A or B Explosives
Division 1.3	Class B Explosives
Division 1.4	Class C Explosives
Division 1.5	Blasting Agents
Division 1.6	No Applicable Hazard Class

Where the classification system in effect prior to January 1, 1991, is referenced in state or local laws, ordinances or regulations not pertaining to the transportation of hazardous materials, the following table may be used to compare old and new hazard class names.

Fireworks fall into two of the six divisions:

Division Hazard Description.

Explosives

1.3
(formerly Class B Special Fireworks)
Mass fire or deflagration hazard. Examples include many non-detonating military devices such as large flares, and many propellants. "Special Fireworks" — the larger devices used in public displays — are included in this category.

Explosives
1.4
(formerly Class C Common Fireworks)
Devices containing limited quantities of explosive or combustible chemical composition. The transportation hazard of these devices is rated "minimum" by DOT. "Common fireworks" devices intended for use by the general public are included in this category.

In comparison, dynamite, TNT, and most military explosives are classed in Division 1.1 and 1.2. These materials and devices possess a detonating or other maximum hazard.

Fireworks may also fall into a category known as "Not Regulated". This category includes

certain small items containing limited amounts of pyrotechnic composition that are packaged in such a way that only a "normal" fire results if a shipping carton containing one of these devices is placed in a bonfire. All items must be tested before they are placed in this category by DOT. "Not regulated" items are exempt from the DOT regulation for Hazardous Materials.

All "explosives" must be formally approved for transportation and assigned an "EX Number" indicating this approval before they can be offered for transportation in the U.S.

Reference: Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations Parts 173.50, 173.51, 173.52, 173.53, 173.56

Information courtesy of The American Pyrotechnics Association