

Shipping Charcoal in Containers?

New rules begin from 2025

Quick Reference Guide: IMDG Code Amendment 42-24

Starting from 2025, tighter rules for charcoal shipments (UN 1361) are transitioning into place to improve the safety of transportation staff, cargo, vessels and the entire supply chain.

Charcoal shipments have caused serious fires on containerships, mainly due to improper handling, non-declaration, and problematic regulation. To address this, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has updated the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code to improve the safety of cargo and everyone working in the supply chain.

Key Changes Starting 2025:

- **Mandatory Declaration as Dangerous Goods:** Shippers must declare all charcoal shipments as Dangerous Goods, with detailed documentation requirements. No exemptions are allowed, as Special Provisions 925 and 223 are removed. A new Special Provision 978 is introduced.
- **Treatment before packing:** Charcoal must undergo a specific weathering process after production, or a specific process after pyrolysis, unless otherwise approved by the competent authority.
- **Packing:** Charcoal must not exceed a temperature of 40°C on the day of packing into packagings. The requirements for packagings have also been changed. The transport of unpackaged charcoal in containers (bulk transport) remains prohibited.
- **Stowage within the Cargo Transport Unit (CTU):** A 30cm gap must be left between the cargo and the top of the container. This is combined with two options: either i) the stowage height of the package(s) in the CTU should not exceed 1.5m, or ii) the maximum block size of the packages should be 16m³ and a minimum of 15cm of space between blocks should be maintained. (N.B.: Acceptance of these options may be subject to liaison between the shipper and the carrier).

Recommendations for Charcoal Producers, Handlers and Shippers:

You need to act now to be compliant with these new provisions.

- **Update Operations:** Align production, handling, and shipping processes with the IMDG Code Amendment 42-24.
- **Training Requirements:** Provide mandatory IMDG Code training for shore-based staff as specified in Chapter 1.3.
- **Apply the IMO/ILO/UNECE Code of Practice for Packing of Cargo Transport Units (CTU Code):** Use the industry's '[CTU Code - A Quick Guide](#)' to ensure the safe transport of charcoal in containers.
- **Declare and document:** Ensure accurate documentation and appropriate declaration of all charcoal to your carrier, to avoid rejection, fines, delays and incidents in transport.
- **Liaise:** Work with your carrier for any specific terms of transport.