
Policies Pertaining to the National Motor Freight Classification



FREIGHT CLASSIFICATION DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL POLICIES PERTAINING TO THE NATIONAL MOTOR FREIGHT CLASSIFICATION

Following are the policies of the Freight Classification Development Council (FCDC) for maintaining the commodity descriptions; classes; rules; packaging definitions, specifications and requirements; and other classification-related provisions contained in the National Motor Freight Classification® (NMFC®).

A. Transportation Characteristics – When evaluating commodities in connection with the assignment of classes, the FCDC must consider the four transportation characteristics of density, handling, stowability and liability.

1. Density – Absent any unusual or significant handling, stowability or liability characteristics, density is of prime importance in the assignment of classes. The FCDC has developed density guidelines for the assignment of classes. The present guidelines are attached hereto.

The density guidelines are used in the assignment of classes where the average density of a particular commodity or group of commodities is representative or reflective of the distribution of densities exhibited by that commodity or commodity group. Furthermore, the density/class relationships set forth in the guidelines presume that there are no unusual or significant handling, stowability or liability characteristics, which would call for giving those characteristics additional or different “weight” in determining the appropriate class.

Commodities or commodity groups exhibiting a density distribution not accurately reflected by a single overall average density may be assigned multiple density-based classes. Where densities are broadly distributed, commodities or commodity groups may be assigned the following full-density scale:

Less than 1	400
1 but less than 2.....	300
2 but less than 4.....	250
4 but less than 6.....	175
6 but less than 8.....	125
8 but less than 10.....	100
10 but less than 12.....	92.5
12 but less than 15.....	85
15 but less than 22.5.....	70
22.5 but less than 30.....	65
30 or greater	60

Density-based classifications should include a reference to Item (Rule) 170, the inadvertence clause, or instead to some other inadvertence provision.

2. **Handling** – The majority of shipments tendered to general commodities carriers are comprised of packaged freight that is readily handled by dock personnel, often with the aid of mechanical handling equipment. Some articles, however, due to their size, weight, configuration, hazardous nature, fragility, etc., pose additional handling difficulties, whether or not mechanical equipment is used, and may necessitate special care or attention.

In evaluating the classification of a particular commodity or commodity group, the FCDC must consider ease or difficulty of handling and the impact of such on the transportability of the involved commodities. Unusual or significant handling characteristics may be a contributing factor in the assignment of classes.

3. **Stowability** – As with handling, most freight tendered to general commodities carriers does not present substantial stowability problems. Some articles, however, present additional stowability considerations, including, but not limited to: 1) loading restrictions necessary to comply with government regulations or carrier policies, such as coload prohibitions in connection with the transportation of hazardous materials; 2) loading restrictions arising from practical considerations, such as excessive weight or excessive length; 3) difficulty in loading other freight adjacent to the commodity due to protrusions or the lack of lateral support; 4) the inability to tier the commodity in carriers' equipment; and 5) the inability to load other freight on top of the commodity due to the absence of regular load-bearing surfaces.

In evaluating the classification of a particular commodity or commodity group, the FCDC must examine stowability and its impact on the transportability of the involved commodities. Unusual or significant stowability considerations may be a contributing factor in the assignment of classes.

4. **Liability** – The liability characteristic includes susceptibility to damage, propensity to damage other freight with which transported, perishability and hazardous nature.

As with handling and stowability, unusual or significant liability characteristics may be a contributing factor in the assignment of classes.

The class(es) assigned to a particular commodity or commodity group may be adjusted from the density guidelines by one or more classes depending on the degree of handling, stowability and/or liability issues exhibited.

The FCDC cannot consider the potential economic impact of a classification change.

- B. **Classification Updating** – The provisions of the NMFC are to be kept up-to-date with respect to the commodities moving in commerce. Included in this policy is the: 1) establishment of classifications for new commodities; 2) amendment of existing classifications to reflect changes in transportation characteristics; 3) establishment of classifications for commodities classed by analogy, in keeping with the requirements of Item (Rule) 421 of the NMFC; and 4) establishment or amendment of classifications for commodities that are a source, or potential source, of interpretation disputes so as to eliminate or avoid those disputes.

- C. Clarification, Simplification and Uniformity** – Generally speaking, the policies grouped under this heading pertain to “housekeeping” matters necessary to improve the usability of the NMFC and to ensure compliance with regulations. The following activities are to be conducted to implement these policies: 1) adding commonly used terminology to descriptions to identify commodities (including trade names, properly noticed, where a commodity is essentially known by a trade name); 2) replacing outdated terminology in commodity descriptions with current terminology; 3) combining descriptions embracing related commodities, including the combining of subclassifications having the same class; 4) eliminating excess or unclear wording, and employing language that is concise and clear as to intent; 5) structuring commodity descriptions so as to foster clarification and simplification; 6) listing commodity descriptions alphabetically by noun or compound noun, as the case may be; 7) replacing broad, indistinct nouns (e.g., assemblies, devices, units) with more specific, definitive nouns wherever appropriate and practicable; 8) listing items under appropriate generic headings; 9) providing uniformity in provisions addressing the same or similar circumstances published in conjunction with different items; and 10) removing obsolete provisions.
- D. Packaging** – The FCDC is to establish and maintain packaging rules and specifications as necessary to ensure that freight is adequately protected and can be handled and stowed in a manner that is reasonably safe and practicable so as to withstand the normal rigors of the less-than-truckload environment.

The FCDC is to evaluate prospective packages or packaging methods against established performance criteria, as reflected by the packaging provisions published in the NMFC. Generally speaking, prospective packages or packaging methods are considered consistent with FCDC packaging policy when their performance is demonstrated to be as good as, or better than, currently authorized packages or packaging methods.

- E. Rules** – The rules published in the NMFC are to be: 1) consistent with current law; 2) consistent with classification precedent and current motor carrier practice; 3) clear as to intent; and 4) otherwise up-to-date.

FREIGHT CLASSIFICATION DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL DENSITY GUIDELINES	
Minimum Average Density (in pounds per cubic foot)	Class
50	50
35	55
30	60
22.5	65
15	70
13.5	77.5
12	85
10.5	92.5
9	100
8	110
7	125
6	150
5	175
4	200
3	250
2	300
1	400
Less than 1	500

The density guidelines are used in the assignment of classes where average density is representative or reflective of the distribution of densities. Furthermore, the density/class relationships set forth in the guidelines presume that there are no unusual or significant handling, stowability or liability characteristics.