

ASHTRAYS ON AIRPLANES® - Revised May 23, 2023

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A Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airworthiness Directive (AD 74-08-09R2, June 24, 1996) required airlines to attach an ashtray to all lavatory doors on every airplane. Also, an earlier-dated basic FAA certification requirement for all newly-manufactured transport category airplanes requires such ashtray installation. Additionally, the same AD requires the installation of NO SMOKING and other placards in and around the lavatories. The FAA categorizes these ashtrays as part of the Minimum Equipment List (MEL) for revenue (passenger carrying) dispatch of each airplane type. The MEL mandates that an airplane with multiple lavatory doors may be operated with up to 50 percent of the lavatory door ashtrays missing or inoperative, provided 50 percent of the missing or inoperative ashtrays are replaced within 3 days and all remaining missing or inoperative ashtrays are replaced within 10 days. An airplane with only 1 lavatory door may be operated for a period of 10 days with the lavatory door ashtray missing or inoperative.

Considering that smoking has not been allowed on all US-operated commercial airliners since the 1990's, the requirement to have the noted ashtrays installed has often been somewhat of a confused issue at airlines I have supported – especially when an airplane cannot be dispatched because of missing ashtrays! The question has often been: “If no smoking is allowed on our airplanes, then why must we keep ashtrays installed?” Please read on.

Although the penalties for violation of the NO SMOKING requirement on commercial airliners can be quite harsh (being detained, arrested, and fined), some people will continue to ignore the rules! Thus, ashtrays are in fact installed to assure that there is a SAFE place to extinguish the smoking material used by any rules violator! Airplane fires, accidents, and fatalities have resulted from still-smoldering cigarettes being disposed of in the lavatory waste containers, a very UNSAFE place since they are filled with mostly readily-combustible paper products!

In the interest of SAFETY, in addition to lavatory ashtrays and various placards being installed in all of today's commercial airliners, lavatory smoke detectors and self-activating lavatory waste container fire extinguishers are now also installed.



TYPICAL LAVATORY DOOR ASHTRAY



WASTE CONTAINER PLACARD (NO CIGARETTES)