



**Subject:** Urgent: Airlines Denying Air Travel to Oxygen-Dependent Passengers Due to Portable Oxygen Concentrator (POC) Battery Confusion

May 21, 2025

**Sean Duffy**

U.S. Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**Chris Rocheleau**

Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Secretary Duffy and Acting Administrator Rocheleau,

We represent millions of Americans who depend on supplemental oxygen to breathe – people with pulmonary hypertension, COPD, pulmonary fibrosis, bronchiectasis, primary ciliary dyskinesia and other respiratory diseases. We are writing with urgency regarding a growing crisis for patients traveling with portable oxygen.

**We are requesting a meeting between our community and senior FAA staff to discuss our concerns and what steps need to occur for FAA to issue clarifying guidance on travel with supplemental oxygen.**

**PROBLEM:** Major airlines are intermittently denying boarding to oxygen-dependent passengers based on inconsistent interpretations of FAA battery regulations despite using portable oxygen concentrators (POCs) labeled as conforming to FAA criteria. [See Appendix for select passenger experiences.]

In addition, the [FAA Batteries and Passengers FAQ](#) lists guidance for many types of lithium batteries and their use, however POC battery guidance is not included.

## BACKGROUND

**1. Technical Confusion Causing Patient Harm:** With airlines no longer offering in-flight oxygen services, POCs are now the only option for oxygen-dependent individuals to access air travel. United Airlines, American Airlines, and Delta Airlines are increasingly turning away passengers by:

- Claiming passengers are carrying too many lithium-ion batteries, even when the batteries they are carrying are under the 100 watt-hours (Wh) that triggers a battery limit.
- Claiming passengers' POC battery cartridges exceed 160-watt hours (Wh) – even though these same devices have been FAA-approved for nearly two decades and continue to be marketed as conforming to FAA criteria.

The core issue involves how battery cartridges are designed and labeled. Leading manufacturers have designed dual-cell configurations to comply with FAA regulations. As described by the manufacturers:

- Caire Industries (Sequal Eclipse): "The battery 7082-SEQ is a power cartridge with two independent cells [98.8+98.8 Wh] within each cartridge. Individually each cell is below the threshold for battery wattage on aircraft, which is why the device is FAA approved. The design has not changed in nearly two decades."
- Inogen (G5): "Our G5 extended battery is labeled as '92.2 Wh + 92.2 Wh.' This DOES NOT mean the total is 184.4. There are two separate battery packs that are discrete within the double battery... with two separate gold-colored connectors. Each connector is connected to only one of the internal battery packs, ensuring compliance with WH restrictions."

Acceptance Criteria for Portable Oxygen Concentrators lists the Inogen and Sequal Eclipse among POCs that have been approved as of May 2016. These POCs were also individually approved in May 2006 and their battery configuration has not changed. They are marketed and sold as FAA compliant. ([https://www.faa.gov/about/initiatives/cabin\\_safety/portable\\_oxygen](https://www.faa.gov/about/initiatives/cabin_safety/portable_oxygen))

**2. Medical Necessity of Sufficient Battery Power:** FAA requires that travelers flying with supplemental oxygen carry batteries that can power their device for at least 150% of the anticipated flight time. For example, a traveler making a 6-hour flight is required to have enough batteries to power their POC for at least 9 hours. Travelers who use oxygen must also plan for oxygen use prior to boarding and after deplaning. In addition, travelers lack accessible or functioning in-flight battery charging options.

Only a limited number of oxygen concentrators, generally those with multi-cell power cartridges, can provide the necessary oxygen flow rate for air travel. It is essential that passengers be permitted to carry on as many power cartridges as they need to meet the FAA's 150% power requirement.

**3. Aviation Safety Record:** Of the 600+ reported lithium battery incidents on aircraft since 2006, none involved portable oxygen concentrators. This safety record demonstrates that current POC designs effectively balance patient needs with aviation safety requirements. ([https://www.faa.gov/hazmat/resources/lithium\\_batteries/incidents](https://www.faa.gov/hazmat/resources/lithium_batteries/incidents))

- 4. Discriminatory Impact:** The Air Carrier Access Act explicitly prohibits discrimination against passengers with disabilities and requires airlines to accommodate their needs. The lack of clarity of the current policies create a "supplemental oxygen glitch" that violates both the letter and spirit of this law. While well-intended for safety, the inconsistent application of battery regulations has created a discriminatory barrier for those requiring supplemental oxygen. When denied boarding due to POC battery confusion, these passengers are effectively barred from:
- Medically necessary travel;
  - Employment opportunities requiring travel; and
  - Family events and connections.

**REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

1. Issue immediate guidance to airlines clarifying that:
  - Power cartridges with two independent cells under 100Wh each meet FAA requirements;
  - Passengers may carry as many batteries as needed to satisfy the 150% flight duration rule as well as for use before and after the flight; and
  - Airlines accept FAA-compliant POCs with associated batteries.
2. Establish a working group of airline representatives, patient advocates, and POC manufacturers to develop standardized labeling and verification processes that gate agents can easily understand and verify and to subsequently work on additional concerns, such as educating POC passengers on required lithium packaging requirements and addressing reported incidents to power off POCs during takeoff and landing — a potentially life-threatening practice that contradicts established FAA guidance.
3. Compensate passengers for their losses caused by these misinterpretations by (but not limited to):
  - Refunding airfare or points for having to rebook flights, even with another airline; and
  - Reimbursing for cost of shipping or replacing batteries.

**SUMMARY:** We respectfully request prompt clarification on the lithium battery requirements as outlined above, as this issue requires immediate attention to prevent further hardship for oxygen-dependent travelers.

In addition, we request a meeting between our community and senior FAA staff. We look forward to collaborating on solutions to ensure the millions of Americans who use supplemental oxygen can travel safely, with dignity, and with the same access to air transportation as all other Americans. **Please contact Katie Kroner at [KatherineK@PHAssociation.org](mailto:KatherineK@PHAssociation.org) or 240-485-0749 to coordinate a meeting.**

Sincerely,

Academy of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Physical Therapy  
Alpha-1 Foundation  
American Association for Respiratory Care  
American College of Chest Physicians  
American Lung Association

American Physical Therapy Association  
American Thoracic Society  
COPD Foundation  
Hawaii COPD Coalition  
National Jewish Health  
Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation  
Pulmonary Hypertension Association  
Running on Air  
The LAM Foundation

## Appendix: Recent Passenger Experiences

### **Cathy – Delta Airlines/ American Airlines**

Cathy, an oxygen user with an Inogen One G5 was denied boarding by Delta Airlines when traveling with two dual batteries. The airline cited a December 1st policy change prohibiting these previously allowed batteries. Cathy was forced to separate from her family (husband and son), who flew as scheduled, while she had to rebook on United Airlines for the following day. When confirming her return flight with American Airlines on January 4th, she was again told her batteries were not permitted. She was able to return home on United Airlines.

### **Margaret – Unknown Airline**

Margaret, a 24/7 oxygen user who has successfully flown for years with an Inogen portable concentrator and three double batteries was recently informed that the FAA "no longer allows" double batteries exceeding 160 watt hours. This notification came after she had already purchased an expensive vacation to Europe.

### **Donna – General Air Travel**

Donna's experience highlights the contradiction between FAA requirements and current enforcement practices. While FAA regulations require travelers to carry batteries sufficient for 150% of expected flight time, conflicting restrictions on spare batteries have made it difficult or impossible for Donna to fly as desired.

### **Colleen – American Airlines**

Colleen, a long-term (17 yr) supplemental oxygen user who travels frequently for professional and personal commitments, adjusted from in-flight oxygen for purchase to a POC as regulations changed. In November 2024, Colleen purchased a replacement SeQual Eclipse POC at a personal cost of \$2,895. This POC is on the airline-approved list and displays the official airline approval symbol. However, American Airlines Special Services recently indicated the battery is "no longer compliant" despite being an identical battery design to the model FAA-approved in 2006.

### **Passenger Experience – Hawaiian Airlines**

A longtime oxygen user who has flown with an FAA-approved POC since 2008 was informed during check-in at SFO that she could not use her device during takeoff and landing. During the flight, approximately 30 minutes before landing, a flight attendant instructed her to turn off her POC completely in preparation for landing. The passenger explained this would cause her oxygen levels to drop to dangerous levels, and after the flight attendant consulted with the pilot, she was permitted to use it until 5-10 minutes before landing, a period of time that still presents risk for serious medical complications.

### **Passenger Experience – Delta Airlines**

An oxygen user who had previously flown without issues (most recently in October) received notification of a new policy after submitting required forms for an upcoming flight. While Delta approved their POC use, they were informed that dual batteries with a combined watt hour exceeding 160 were now prohibited under a new Delta policy.