

Freight Classification Development Center

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**RE: Docket 2026-2 | Subject 1: NMFC Item 640 – Mixed Shipments and Articles
Classified by Weight or Quantity**

To Whom It May Concern:

We respectfully submit the following comments regarding the proposed amendments to NMFC Item 640 contained in Docket 2026-2, Subject 1. These comments are offered in the interest of maintaining consistency within the National Motor Freight Classification (NMFC), preserving classification integrity, and ensuring equitable application of the rules across all parties subject to their application.

Proposed Changes to NMFC Item 110, Sec. 8(d)

Before addressing the proposed amendments to Item 640, we would like to comment on the related changes proposed for NMFC Item 110, Sec. 8(d).

Current Language

"Unless otherwise provided... may be calculated by using the total weight and the total cube."

Proposed Language

"Unless otherwise provided... shall be calculated on each handling unit provided the weight and dimensions of each handling unit are identifiable by the carrier."

We appreciate the effort to improve clarity by replacing the ambiguous phrase "may be" with the more directive "shall be." Greater consistency and predictability in classification rules benefit both carriers and shippers.

However, the proposed language introduces a new standard, "provided the weight and dimensions of each handling unit are identifiable by the carrier," which appears inconsistent with existing NMFC provisions.

For example, NMFC Item 250100, Sec. 3(a) states:

"When carrier or its agent believes it is necessary to verify the stated description of a shipment as tendered, the carrier or its agent will make or cause such inspection to be made, or require other sufficient evidence to determine the actual character of the property being shipped."

This language provides carriers with the authority to inspect freight or obtain sufficient evidence when verification is deemed necessary. Accordingly, the proposed language in Item 110 appears to create uncertainty regarding whether a carrier's ability to identify shipment characteristics is the governing standard or whether inspection remains the applicable mechanism for verification.

We respectfully request that a consistent standard be maintained throughout the NMFC.

Additionally, the proposed revision removes guidance regarding situations where individual handling-unit weights and dimensions are not available. The absence of such guidance creates uncertainty regarding the proper rating methodology and may result in inconsistent application.

Accordingly, we propose the following amendment:

Proposed Amendment

"Unless otherwise provided, where a shipment consists of multiple handling units, the density shall be calculated on each handling unit, except that where shipping papers show only a total weight for all handling units tendered, and when a carrier inspection is not performed, the density shall be calculated using the total weight and total cube of the shipment."

This approach preserves the intent of improved clarity while maintaining consistency with existing NMFC provisions.

Proposed Changes to NMFC Item 640

We respectfully offer the following comments regarding the amendments proposed to NMFC Item 640.

Current NMFC Item 640, Sec. 2.

"Single shipments subject to two or more rates or classes, when differently classed articles are separately packaged, will be charged at the actual or authorized estimated weight, and at the rate or class applicable to each..."

Current NMFC Item 640, Sec. 3. (b)

"When articles subject to different classes... are securely unitized... they will be charged for at the actual weights of the separate articles... at the applicable classes..."

Consideration 1**Proposed NMFC Item 640, Sec. 2.**

"Except as outlined in Sec. 3, each handling unit shall be classified in accordance with the 13-subprovision density scale published within this Classification."

The proposed provision would replace article-specific classifications with a handling unit density determination. As a result, commodities that would move under established commodity-specific classifications may be assessed at a different class despite no change in their transportation characteristics.

For example, a shipment containing mineral pulp in bags (NMFC 137360, Class 50) and snare drums in boxes (NMFC 138890, Class 125) could be classified solely according to handling-unit density. If unitized pallets have a density of 7PCF, the handling units would be assessed at Class 125 under the proposed methodology.

However, the mineral pulp's weight, density, packaging, and transportation characteristics remain unchanged whether it ships independently, or is unitized with another commodity.

Consequently, the proposal would produce materially different classifications for freight with identical transportation characteristics. This raises concerns regarding classification consistency and predictability.

Consideration 2**Proposed NMFC Item 640, Sec. 2.**

"When the shipper has provided weight and dimensions for each handling unit on the original bill of lading, those weights and dimensions will be used to calculate density, pending carrier verification."

The phrase "pending carrier verification" introduces ambiguity regarding the status of information provided on the original bill of lading (BOL).

The BOL serves as the contract of carriage and establishes the shipment information relied upon by all parties. If a carrier wishes to verify dimensions, weight, or commodity descriptions, the authority to do so already exists under NMFC Item 250100.

Accordingly, we believe additional clarification is needed regarding the meaning and application of "pending carrier verification."

If verification is intended to mean physical inspection, that authority already exists within the NMFC and the additional qualifier may be redundant and subject to differing interpretation.

Consideration 3

Proposed NMFC Item 640, Sec. 2.

"In the absence of accurate information on the original bill of lading, at carrier's discretion, density may be calculated based on the total weight and overall cube of the entire shipment or on the weight and dimensions of each individual package or handling unit."

This provision grants discretion regarding the methodology used to calculate density when shipment information is deemed incomplete. However, because no objective criteria are provided regarding when one method should be selected over another, shipments may be rated with the methodology that results in higher freight costs with no specific reasoning.

Accordingly, we recommend establishing clear standards governing the application of each methodology to promote consistency, transparency, and fairness.

Consideration 4

Proposed NMFC Item 640, Sec. 2. & Sec. 3.

"In such instances all parties must be notified of the use of this Rule and section."

We respectfully request clarification regarding implementation of this requirement, including:

- What constitutes sufficient notice?
- At what point must notice be provided?
- What recourse exists if proper notice is not provided?

- How will compliance be monitored and enforced?

Additional guidance would help ensure uniform application throughout the industry.

Consideration 5

Proposed NMFC Item 640, Sec. 3.

"In the case that a unitized handling unit contains an article bearing the HS&L symbol (☞), Bomburst symbol (☛), or has classes based on packaging, greatest dimension, or some other factor besides density, the handling unit will be assessed at the class provided for the highest classed article in or on the unitized handling unit."

This proposal establishes precedence for articles identified by the HS&L symbol, Bomburst symbol, packaging-based classes, dimensional classes, and other non-density factors. However, the proposal does not explain why those classifications should supersede otherwise applicable classifications assigned to other commodities occupying the same handling unit.

For example, a shipment containing Class 4.2 PG I flammable solid (☞☛ NMFC 44515 Sub 6, Class 150) and mineral pulp in bags (NMFC 137360, Class 50) would result in the entire handling unit being assessed at Class 150.

Yet the mineral pulp's exact same weight and packaging on a different pallet could/would be rated by the applicable Class 50.

Without additional justification, the proposal appears to override established article-specific classifications solely because commodities are consolidated onto a common handling unit.

Consideration 6

Current Item 640, Sec. 3. (b) (3)

"The weight of pallets, platforms, racks, skids, unitizing material or packing devices as required by Paragraph 3(b)(5) must be shown on shipping order and bill of lading and will be charged for at the lowest class applicable to any article or articles comprising not less than 5 percent of the weight unitized on such pallet, platform, rack or skid."

The consequences of the proposed changes coupled with the removal of this note also bring the weight of pallets, platforms, racks, skids, utilizing material or packing devices to the same class being applied to the unit. Thus, if the classes applied are higher, as exemplified in Consideration 1 and Consideration 5, this may increase transportation charges attributable to unitization materials even though the characteristics of those materials themselves have not changed.

Summation

The current provisions of NMFC Item 640 allow multiple commodities to be consolidated into a single handling unit while preserving the application of their respective classifications. This reflects a longstanding transportation practice that promotes efficient trailer utilization and freight consolidation.

The proposed amendments may discourage the consolidation of commodities with differing classifications, including hazardous and non-hazardous articles, because one commodity's classification may supersede the classifications otherwise applicable to other products within the same handling unit.

Such outcomes may reduce consolidation efficiency, create operational complexities, and increase transportation costs without any corresponding change in the physical transportation characteristics of the commodities involved.

As we understand it, recent NMFC initiatives have focused on simplification and greater reliance on density-based classifications. While those objectives are understandable, the application of a handling-unit-based classification should not negate otherwise applicable commodity classifications when the underlying transportation characteristics remain unchanged.

The same commodity, possessing the same weight, density, packaging, and transportation characteristics, should not receive a materially different classification solely because it is consolidated with another commodity on the same handling unit.

For these reasons, we believe the proposed amendments introduce ambiguity, create potential inconsistencies with existing NMFC provisions, and may produce classification outcomes that are disconnected from the transportation characteristics of the commodities being shipped.

Request

In consideration of the concerns outlined above, we respectfully request that the current application of NMFC Items 110 and 640 be retained unless further revisions can be developed that advance the goals of density-based classification while preserving consistency, transparency, and equitable application across all parties.

Specifically, we request consideration of the following:

NMFC Item 110, Sec. 8(d)

"Unless otherwise provided, where a shipment consists of multiple handling units, the density shall be calculated on each handling unit, except that where shipping papers show only a total weight for all handling units tendered, and when a carrier inspection is not performed, the density shall be calculated on the total cube."

NMFC Item 640

Sec. 1. When a single shipment is subject to one class, it will be assessed using the actual or authorized estimated weight and at the applicable class.

Sec. 2. Single shipments subject to two or more rates or classes, when differently classed articles are separately packaged, will be charged at the actual or authorized estimated weight and at the rate or class applicable to each, subject to the minimum charge in carriers' tariffs.

Sec. 3(a). Except as provided in Sec. 3(b), the charge for a package, pallet, platform, rack, or skid meeting the requirements of Item 265 and containing or bearing differently classed articles shall be classified in accordance with the 13-subprovision density scale published within this Classification.

All other provisions of Item 640 should remain unchanged.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on these proposed amendments. We respectfully request careful consideration of these comments and the potential impacts that the proposed changes may have on classification consistency, shipment consolidation practices, and the equitable application of the NMFC.

Respectfully,

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