

# FAQs and Cost Saving Tips: Drayage and Material Handling - Moving your freight inside the venue

Knowledge is the foundation upon which we build success in everything we do. When exhibiting at trade shows knowledge about shipping and carriers, materials handling rates, and show regulations is critical to insuring both a logistically and financially successful event.

Shipping and material handling can become a significant portion of the overall exhibit budget, on average 11%\*, and as such should be examined closely to evaluate costs, reduce expenditures and increase program returns.

The following information is provided to assist you in analyzing your options and aid in your overall budget decisions.

*\*TSEA Annual Exhibitor Survey*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is material handling?**

Material handling, also called drayage, is the fee charged to you by the general service contractor for (1) accepting your freight from your carrier, (2) delivering it to your booth, (3) removing and storing empty containers during the show, (4) returning empty containers at show close, and (5) moving your freight back to the docks and onto your carriers truck for outbound shipping.

### **How are fees for material handling charged?**

Material handling is a one-time fee based on weight. Your shipment will be weighed when it arrives, either at the advance warehouse or the convention center dock, and a fee will be assessed per 100 pounds. This fee is only assessed on the inbound freight weight. Your shipment is not weighed or billed again. The one-time fee covers all the movement listed above.

### **Are there different rates for material handling? When? Why?**

Material handling rates are different for shipments sent to the advance warehouse vs. direct to show site, during regular hours (straight time) vs. after hours/weekends (overtime), crated vs. loose packaged shipments. Fees are based on the amount of time and effort it takes to move freight the number of times required to get it to and from the booth. Rates, however, can be deceiving. The advance rate is slightly higher because the contractor is accepting the freight at their warehouse, storing it, and then reloading it to take it to the center, but if your show moves in on a weekend, the lower direct rate will most often have an overtime surcharge. This could make the direct to show rate 30% higher than the advance.

### **Do I get charged again for my outbound shipment?**

No. Your material handling charges are assessed only one time, on inbound freight weight. This one fee covers all movement of your freight by the contractor as listed above. If you need items moved to special storage areas or delivered back to you prior to show close, this may incur additional charges. Also, if you use the general service contractor for shipping services, these fees are separate from material handling.

### **Can I carry my own freight and/or use dock for unloading?**

Yes and No. Most venues will allow you to hand-carry items through the entrance of the exhibit hall. Most will allow crates and bags with small non-commercial built-in wheels (suitcases, banner cases) to assist you. You can never use a hand truck, flatbed or bellman cart to move items; this violates state and local union laws. Bringing your own vehicle to the dock is allowed, but depending on your shipment size, costs will vary. All materials brought to dock must be handled by the contractor, so material handling fees apply. If you have small shipment you may be able to arrange cart service. Typically this

is reserved for shipments under 200 lbs and/or 8 boxes; has a flat fee; and is limited to one cart –one time.

### **What happens to my empty containers during the show?**

Your empty containers and boxes must be labeled with “Empty” stickers which note your booth name and number. These stickers can be obtained at the service desk onsite. The general contractor will remove and store empties at end of move-in for the duration of the show. The empties will be returned at close of show so you can pack up your items for outbound shipping. This service is included in the material handling charges.

## Cost Saving Tips

- Read the Exhibitor Services Manual and pay close attention to shipping and receiving dates, this will reduce surcharges for re-routed shipments or shipments that arrive late.
- If the general service contract is also the official freight carrier for the show consider using them to ship your freight and ask for a discounted material handling rate.
- Consider shipping to the advance warehouse instead of direct to show. While advance can seem more expensive, it actually cost less than direct shipments if there is a chance of overtime surcharges being applied.
- Consider the weight and design of your display. Since material handling charges are based on weight a light-weight fabric display can be both wyw-catching and cost effective.
- Consider renting a display from the general service contractor. A rented display will be assembled when you arrive and will eliminate some of your shipping, material handling and storage charges.
- Consolidate smaller packages and boxes into one larger box or pallet. This will avoid the ‘loose’ materials or ‘special handling’ surcharges which can increase your fees 30 – 50%.
- Consolidate small shipments whenever possible. Most contractors charge fees based on a minimum of 200 lbs per shipment received; so three small shipments of 100 lbs is more expensive than one shipment of 300 lbs.
- Ship small, last minute packages to your hotel and carry them into the exhibit hall yourself. Those last minute brochures may cost more in material handling then printing and most venues allow you to hand carry items into the exhibit hall; wheeled carts are usually prohibited.