

FAQs and Cost Saving Tips: Shipping and Transportation - Getting your freight to the Convention Center

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 2009 Annual Exhibitor Survey*

Frequently Asked Questions

What is shipping and how is it different from material handling fees?

Shipping is the process by which you get your freight to and from the show venue. Material handling is the fees charged by the general service contractor to receive your freight and move it throughout the show.

Do I have a choice of Carrier?

Yes. While most shows will designate an official carrier for the show an exhibitor may always choose another. It is important to note, however, that if you use a non-official show carrier then should something happen to your freight, show management is limited in what it can do to assist you in recovery of lost items, replacement of items or financial reimbursement from the vendor.

Can I use FedEx or UPS?

Yes. These shipments will be received as any other carrier would be by the general service contractor. FedEx and UPS, called common carriers, do not deliver to your booth. They deliver to the docks just like the larger freight carriers. Both FedEx and UPS have freight services for delivering large shipments. These will be assessed material handling charges.

If you are only shipping a few small boxes a common carrier can save you money. Usually there is a small package acceptance fee for small boxes/shipments sent via common carriers; check the material handling information in the Exhibitor Services Manual for specifics on fees, sizes and weights accepted.

What is LTL shipping and freight forwarders?

LTL stands for less than truckload and refers to carriers who specialize in moving smaller than full truckload shipments by combining shipments from various organizations onto one trailer. These types of freight forwarding companies are commonly referred to as LTL shippers or over the road because they use trucks and not air-freight to move your items. LTL service saves you money because the full cost of truck, driver and fuel is split among several groups.

Where and when do I send my booth?

Should I ship to the Warehouse (Advance) or the Convention Center (Direct)?

It depends. If your freight is ready to go, shipping to the Advance Warehouse is always recommended. By shipping to the advance warehouse you will be able to track your shipment and insure it arrives in plenty of time for the show. The general service contractor will accept your freight, store it for up to 30 days until show move in, and deliver it to your booth. If you ship directly to show site your window of delivery is smaller, usually just one or two days, and often this means you are trying to track your shipment during your own travel to show. Additionally, once your freight arrives at the dock it can take hours to get it unloaded and delivered to your booth costing you valuable time in set up.

If you must ship direct to the convention center pay close attention to deliver dates and times. A delivery that arrives on a non-move in day can be rejected and cost your time and money in tracing and redelivery. Additionally, make sure you do not hire any labor to begin at move-in start time. The general service contractor can take a few hours to unload and deliver your freight. So if your carrier arrives at 9am, your booth freight may not be delivered to your booth until 1pm. A labor call for 10am will cost you either 3 hours of standby time, or a reschedule fee.

Cost Saving Tips

- Choose a carrier who is familiar with exhibitions. Experience can save time and money.
- Consider using the official service provider - often the general contractor. They are guaranteed to have onsite representation and can help eliminate issues like wait time and late fees, surcharges and special handling delays.
- Understand that most carrier charge a premium for trade show shipments and ask for discount off the standard rate used for exhibit material.
- Fewer is better. Make sure your shipment is condensed into as few boxes, crates and pallets as possible. Loose boxes can cause increases in fees due to special handling.
- Make sure your shipment is properly labeled – use shipping labels provided in Exhibitor Service Manual as a guide – and remove all old labels.
- Provide your carrier with as much show detail as possible – include event name, booth number, move in schedule, dock hours, and an onsite contact.
- Ask your carrier about ancillary charges – wait time fees, fuel surcharges, and any other charges that may be added to the bill. These fees can add 30% or more to the original quote.
- Make sure your carrier is not going to split your shipment. Split shipments lead to multiple receiving bills, and ultimately higher material handling costs. Most shows have a minimum weight per receive shipment of 200 lbs.
- If you do multiple shows, consider negotiating with a national carrier for a bulk discount. Many carrier will offer a percentage discount per show for a minimum number of shipments.
- Make sure what you are shipping cannot be purchased or rented for a cheaper fee at show site. Tables and chairs can often be rented from general service contractor and will reduce weight and size of shipment.
- Track your shipments with your carrier and bring all paperwork onsite. Tracking numbers are how the general service contract will be able to locate misplaced items at the convention center.