

Guide to Freight Holiday Shipping

The holidays aren't just the happiest time of the year — for small and mid-sized business (SMB) shippers, they're also one of the busiest! Luckily, by planning ahead for the shipping rush, your business (and your customers) can enjoy a cheerful, low-stress holiday season.

Read on as Unishippers outlines everything you need to know to prepare a successful holiday shipping game plan.



PROPERLY PREP YOUR PALLETS

When scrambling to get things out the door this holiday season, it's important to still take the time to properly prep your freight shipments. While taking shortcuts could seem like a way to speed things up, cutting corners may actually end up costing you more time and money in the long run.

Follow these simple (yet often overlooked) steps to ensure your holiday shipments arrive on time and without damage:



Pack appropriately

Select a sturdy pallet made from wood or plastic that's strong enough to support your shipment's load. The pallet should be in good condition without any broken boards, protruding fasteners or large gaps where material could fall through. When loading boxes onto the pallet, stack them squarely, corner-to-corner, without any overhang.



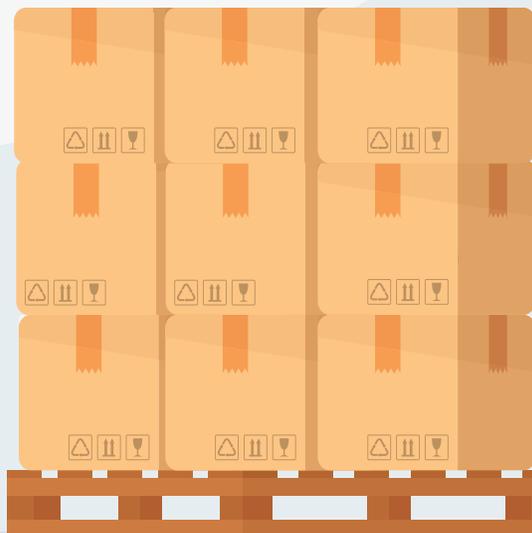
Put a label on it

You wouldn't put a present under the tree without a name tag — and you shouldn't put a shipment on your pallet without a label either! Even if you choose not to label each pallet individually, you can still mark boxes "1 of 10," "2 of 10" and so on to help avoid loss in transit.



Wrap twice to ship once

Poorly wrapped pallets are the main reason shipments end up damaged or lost, so don't skimp on the shrink wrap! To properly secure your load, use a 60-gauge stretch wrap, wrapping it around the freight (including corners) at least two times. For heavy loads over 150 lbs., you should also fasten the freight with unbreakable straps.



PLAN FOR CHANGES IN FEES & GUARANTEES

We get it: no one likes unexpected shipping fees. But with tighter capacity comes higher shipping costs — and carriers are experiencing even higher demand this year than usual. Stay up-to-date on holiday shipping rates and service guarantees (and their limitations) so you can plan your budget accordingly.

Don't let holiday shipping blow your budget this year!
Consider these tips to stay on track:



Pay attention to raised rates

You should expect to see higher freight shipping rates during the holiday shipping season. Check the carrier's website for more details, since rates may change as the season progresses.



Check for suspended service guarantees

Carriers often modify or suspend their money-back service guarantees during the peak shipping season, so make sure to check with your carrier before you ship.



Plan for value-add services

If your shipment is oversized or requires special handling or other value-add services, you will likely incur an additional fee. Plan your budget ahead of time to account for any additional charges that you may incur during the peak holiday season.



Start shipping as soon as possible

If you don't allow yourself enough time, you may find yourself paying for a faster (and more expensive) service to get your freight delivered on time. By getting your shipments out the door right away, you allow yourself the wiggle room to use a more economical delivery type.

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL RESOURCES

Download [Unishippers' Guide to Comparing Freight Service Types](#) to learn which is right for your needs during the holidays.



Learn about the most common fees you may incur by downloading [Unishippers' Guide to Freight Shipping Fees](#).

EVALUATE INSURANCE OPTIONS

Dealing with lost or damaged freight is always a headache — but especially during the busy holiday season! And while it's a common misconception that shipments are automatically insured by the carrier through their limits of liability, carrier liability may not actually protect the full value of your lost or damaged shipments. That's why we recommend opting for additional insurance for your important and high-value shipments.

Unfortunately, shipment damage and theft is more common during the holiday season. Consider these tips to protect your freight in transit:

Invest in insurance

Full trucks and tight holiday schedules mean your freight is typically handled more in transit — and therefore more susceptible to damage. That's why it's especially important to ensure your holiday shipments are protected by selecting insurance when booking your freight.

Opt for faster delivery speeds

To help limit unexpected loss or damage, consider opting for faster or more direct transit for your freight. By avoiding having your freight sit overnight — or simply by needing less handling in transit — you can give your shipment the best chance of a successful, trouble-free delivery.

Consider theft protection

Vet your freight carriers by asking how they seal and secure their trailers in transit. Make sure you choose to work with carriers who take special care to keep their trailers from being tampered with, limiting the chances of freight theft.



REVIEW HOLIDAY CLOSURES

It's no secret that many carriers do not pick up or deliver on major holidays. The majority of carriers will not deliver shipments on Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve or New Year's Day. Make sure to plan ahead for holiday closures or changes to hours of operation by checking carrier websites ahead of time.



Consider these other quick tips to ensure your freight arrives on time (and without damage), despite holiday closures:

Avoid missed pickups and drop-offs

Did you know that some carriers operate on reduced hours during the holidays? Be aware of any changes to shipping cutoff times so you don't miss any pickups or drop-offs!

Plan ahead for perishables

Since most businesses are closed on the weekends, be sure to map out the best days to ship perishables and other time-sensitive items.

Be mindful of winter weather

If your freight might wait outside for a few days at its destination, check the weather to ensure it won't be exposed to extreme temperatures that could damage its contents.

PROTECT AGAINST COLD TEMPERATURES

Keep your cool this holiday shipping season by protecting your freight from freezing temperatures! For a small fee, many carriers offer freeze protection services to ensure your freight arrives in good condition — regardless of the weather.

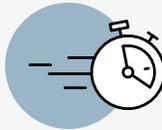
While “protect from freeze” services vary from carrier to carrier, they typically include:



Outdoor temperature monitoring



Special, visually distinctive labels for freezable goods



Accelerated service to minimize transit time through cold areas



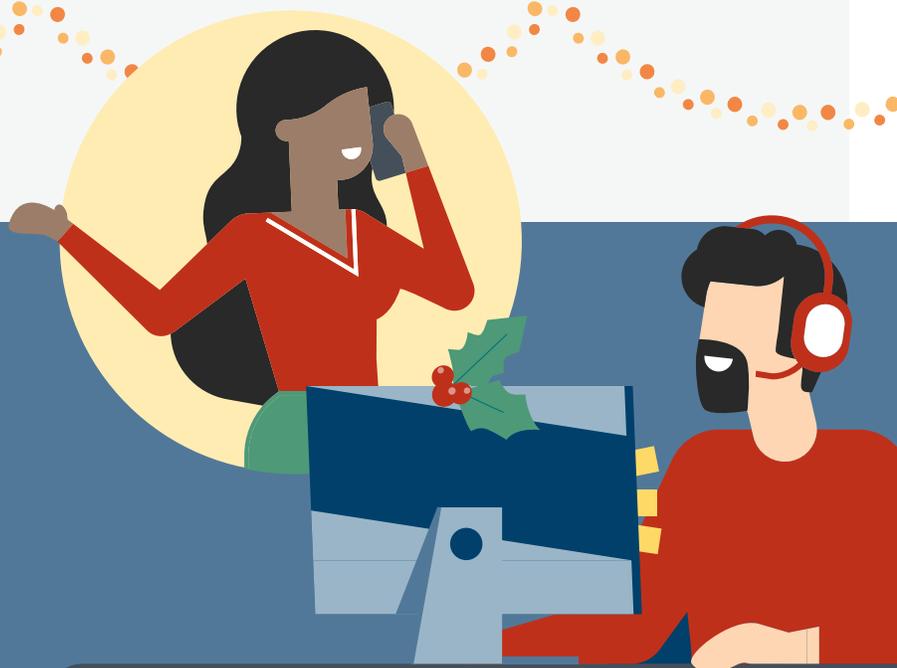
Insulating blankets wrapped around at-risk shipments



Heated trailers and “warm rooms” to protect freight in transit

NOT SURE IF YOUR FREIGHT IS AT RISK?

Contact [Unishippers](#) to determine whether your shipment requires freeze protection services and which carrier(s) is the best fit for your needs.



PLAN AHEAD FOR POSSIBLE DELAYS

The holiday season brings with it winter storms and holiday closures, which can cause unexpected delays for you and your customers. By planning ahead for controllable factors, you can set your business up for peak shipping success and give your customers a happier holiday.

Follow these tips to avoid delays and customer frustrations down the line:



Evaluate your supply chain

The holiday shipping rush only worsens global supply chain delays, which is why it's important to have a clear picture of your supply chain — and a plan in place if you encounter an issue with a supplier down the road.



Plan for inclement weather

Make sure to monitor the weather — not only at your own location, but also at the shipping destination — so you can notify customers of any potential weather delays.



Set clear expectations

From the beginning, make it clear to your customers how quickly you can fill holiday orders (fulfilment times are often slower during the holidays!) and how long it will take for their purchase to arrive.



Don't wait to ship

Ship your freight as early as possible to account for any possible service interruptions in transit.



HAVE A RESPONSE PLAN

Even with the best planning, unfortunately, sometimes things can still go wrong. But don't let loss or damage derail your holiday season! By creating a response plan ahead of time, you can be ready to go if you do happen to experience any holiday shipping hiccups.

Get started making your own holiday shipping response plan with these helpful tips:



Take pictures beforehand

Be sure to take pictures of your freight before it's shipped — especially for valuable items! This gives you something to reference if you do end up needing to file a claim with the carrier.



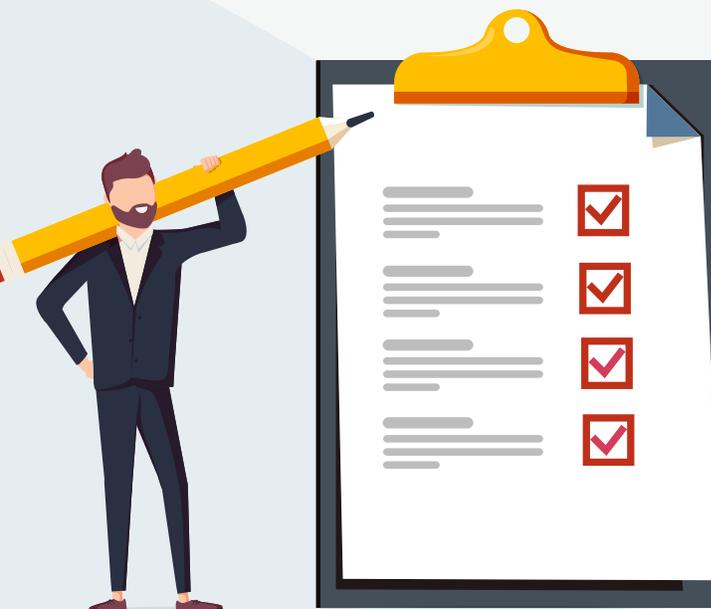
Offer proactive customer support

If a shipment is delayed, damaged or lost in transit, provide your customers with regular updates on when a resolution will be reached.



Don't delay filing a claim

If loss or damage does occur, make sure to file a claim with the carrier right away. Carriers typically will not process claims on unpaid shipments, so it's also important to pay your shipping invoice on time — even for damaged shipments!



Download Unishippers' Roadmap to Freight Claim Success and learn everything you need to know about successfully resolving a claim.

'Tis the Season for Freight Shipping Success

Don't let unexpected shipping issues derail your holiday season! Your business deserves an affordable and effective holiday shipping strategy — and Unishippers is here to help.

With our network of 75+ top freight carriers, we're sure to have access to the services you need at a price that fits your budget. Pair that with access to our dedicated team of shipping experts, and you've got a winning combination for peak shipping success.

So why wait? Let our team of shipping experts come up with a customized game plan to ensure your holiday shipping logistics are a smashing success.

Contact Unishippers to get a holiday shipping assessment today.

unishippers.com

