DEALING WITH FREIGHT DISPUTES

Managing your freight shipping means planning for variables that you know will affect cost. But sometimes you may be assessed charges that you weren’t expecting or that you don’t think are correct. Disputes happen from time to time—and when they do, Unishippers is here to help. Check out these tips for understanding and dealing with freight disputes.
REWEIGH OR RECLASS CHARGES

Weight and commodity classification, or “class,” are two factors that impact the cost of your shipment. Accurately stating the weight and class of your shipment when you get a quote will help avoid any unnecessary reweigh or reclassification charges.

The burden of providing correct information is on the shipper, so taking a few extra moments to correctly determine the weight and class of your shipment can make a world of difference to your quote’s accuracy as well as your bottom line. If the shipment has been improperly weighted or classed, a reweigh and/or reclass fee may apply.

When determining the weight of your shipment, be precise and make sure to include all packaging in your calculations—even the pallet! Classifying your shipment properly is equally important. There are many factors that go into determining a shipment’s class, including:

- Type of packing material
- Type of material the product is made of
- Type of crate
- Intended use of the commodity

Learn how to accurately class your shipment with Unishippers’ How to Class Freight in 4 Minutes video.
If you are ever faced with an invalid reweigh or reclass charge, be sure to file your dispute right away and provide adequate documentation to support the dispute, including:

- The original packing slip, purchase order and invoice
- Photos of the shipment prior to shipping, if possible, including the packaging and commodity
- Product spec sheets showing the ship weight of the product, material composition and dimensions
- Certificate showing scale calibration in the last six months
- Documentation indicating the purpose or practical use of the product

As with all negotiations with the carrier, the more documentation you have to prove your case, the better, and the more efficient the carrier can be in resolving your dispute.
LIFTGATE FEES

If your freight receiver does not have a dock, a liftgate may be necessary to load or unload your shipment. Carriers are not required to notify the shipper before using a liftgate and charging the liftgate fee. If a liftgate is required for delivery, these charges are valid.

The best way to avoid a liftgate charge is to understand any special requirements of the delivery location prior to shipping. Remember that a liftgate is often required at residential, non-commercial or limited access locations and when deliveries are made to a curbside—essentially, any place without a loading dock.

If a carrier discovers that a liftgate is required at any point during transport, they may use a liftgate at their discretion and apply a liftgate fee to the invoice. These fees can be disputed but require proof—such as a delivery receipt or pictures of the pickup or delivery location showing a loading dock—that a liftgate was not required or was applied in error.

If a shipper does not indicate that a liftgate will be required for a shipment and a truck is dispatched that cannot handle the delivery, the shipment could likely incur both a liftgate fee and a redelivery fee in addition to being delayed.
RESIDENTIAL OR LIMITED ACCESS FEES

Freight pickups and deliveries to residential areas or locations that have limited or secured access often require an additional fee.

If you are shipping to a residential address, a residential surcharge may be applied to the shipment. An address is considered residential if it is a location where individuals reside, even if a commercial business is operating out of the home. Rules for deliveries to limited access or residential locations vary, so it’s a good idea to check with your carrier before you ship. Shipments may also be assessed a fee if scheduled for pickup or delivery to a location with limited or secured access.

While each carrier has slightly different guidelines, limited access fees generally apply to delivery locations that:

- Are not open to the public during normal business hours
- Require extensive security-related inspections
- Do not offer regular loading docks
- Require a smaller or specialized truck for pickup or delivery
It’s possible that a carrier may consider a destination residential if the consignee is an individual and not a company. If this happens, you can dispute the charge by providing documentation such as the following to show that the location in question was not actually residential:

- Information about the building
- Screenshots or photos of the facility, including roads and loading docks
- Statements regarding how the freight was delivered

To get an accurate quote, make sure to indicate if the address is in a residential or limited access area when preparing your shipment.
INSIDE DELIVERY AREA CHARGES

An inside delivery area charge may be applied if your freight needs to be picked up or delivered inside a commercial location rather than to a receiving area directly adjacent to the truck.

If a driver is required to push the freight up a driveway, around a corner or into a garage, an inside delivery area fee may be applied. If the freight needs to be delivered more than a few feet into a building, up stairs or into an elevator, the delivery charge will likely increase.

The carrier is not required to provide notification or get permission for inside delivery. If this service is required or requested and the carrier performs the service, the applied charge is valid and cannot be disputed.

To get an accurate quote, make sure to indicate that inside delivery is needed when preparing your shipment.
RE-DELIVERY FEES

Re-delivery fees are applied when a delivery has been attempted but could not be fulfilled, requiring an additional trip to deliver the shipment.

Generally, re-delivery fees are applicable when the carrier is not at fault, such as when a delivery attempt is made during normal business hours (8am – 5pm). Re-delivery fees may also be applied if access was an issue.

Situations requiring re-delivery fees due to equipment needs may include:

- Deliveries to businesses in downtown areas with ordinances restricting large trucks
- Businesses in strip malls with inadequate space for the tractor/trailer to enter or exit
- Deliveries to businesses with parking lots too small for a tractor/trailer

A re-delivery charge can be disputed if the failed attempt was the carrier’s fault— for example, if the carrier went to the wrong address or if the carrier attempted delivery outside of normal business hours. To dispute a re-delivery charge, you will need to provide the bill of lading, delivery receipt, a statement from the receiver and proof of normal business hours.
When a consignee requires a delivery appointment or notification prior to delivery, fees will apply. These services are provided at the request of the shipper and are valid charges.

A specific consignee may have notification or appointment instructions on file with the carrier for any shipment to their location. It is the shipper’s responsibility to understand the requirements of the consignee in advance so that the quote is as accurate as possible. If the consignee does require this service, the shipper will be billed. As with other fees, the carrier is not required to notify or get permission before providing this service.

To dispute appointment/notification fees, you must prove that the service was never requested. You may need to:

- Check the bill of lading
- Check the delivery receipt
- Speak with the receiver to determine validity

The best way to avoid surprise charges is to understand any special requirements of the consignee or limitations associated with the destination location.
OVER-LENGTH FEES

If your shipment is long and narrow, you may be charged an over-length fee. The easiest way to avoid an over-length fee is to provide precise dimensions on the initial quote.

Unlike a large volume shipment, over-length shipments typically take up a long amount of space but not much width. Make sure that the dimensions of your package are accurate and provable (not an estimate). In most cases, over-length fees are assessed per piece. Depending on the carrier, a bundled package may cost less.

If you believe you were incorrectly charged an over-length fee, you will need to file a dispute and provide documentation proving that your shipment did not meet the requirements of an over-length charge. This could include:

- A copy of the original BOL
- Sales invoices
- A manufacturer spec sheet with shipping dimensions
- Pictures of the shipment shown against a measuring tape

If the carrier decides to re-measure the dimensions of your shipment and determines it is larger than originally quoted, you may be charged a freight inspection fee in addition to an over-length fee.
GUARANTEED DELIVERY FEES

Standard guarantee service typically guarantees delivery by a specific time on the standard transit delivery day. If you indicate a required delivery date, most carriers will do their best to deliver by the date indicated on the bill of lading—sometimes expediting the delivery.

If the delivery date on your bill of lading requires faster service than standard transit allows, you may be inadvertently requesting expedited services that incur additional charges. In this case, the charges are valid.

If a guaranteed service is requested but not met, it should be fairly easy to have the charges removed. You will need to provide documentation that a guarantee was requested, that all the carrier’s requirements for guaranteed shipments were followed, and that there were no delays beyond the carrier’s control. You will then need to prove that the carrier did not perform the guaranteed service using the carrier’s own delivery receipt and tracking.

Many carriers require guaranteed service failures to be filed within 15 calendar days of the delivery date. After that time, they may refuse to waive or reduce charges.
TRADESHOW FEES

Any shipment traveling to or from a tradeshow, convention or exhibition requires special consideration and handling that will incur additional fees.

It’s important to choose a carrier that is experienced in delivering to and from tradeshows. Following a few simple guidelines can ensure smooth tradeshow shipping and minimize avoidable fees.

BILL OF LADING

The bill of lading must include more detail than typically required, such as a tradeshow booth number and the tradeshow coordinator’s contact information. Without these additional details, the shipment may not arrive on time, and you could incur additional fees to re-route the shipment or update the bill of lading.

DELIVERY AND PICKUP WINDOWS

Carriers generally need to deliver to tradeshows on a certain date and within a time window arranged by the tradeshow event manager. The shipment must also be picked up quickly at the end of a tradeshow or it could be sent to storage, incurring additional fees. To avoid those extra charges, make sure the carrier knows the required pickup time.
DELAYS
If the carrier is required to wait during pickup or delivery, this will likely result in an increased rate. Similarly, if a carrier is required to pick up or deliver a shipment on a weekend, holiday or after hours, your shipment may incur additional fees.

Even if the service wasn’t fully completed, or wasn’t completed on time, the carrier will still charge a fee if their tradeshow shipping processes were not followed. If the carrier did not have all the necessary information, or if the shipment was not scheduled with enough time to make the delivery, it will be hard to dispute the additional charges. Remember to document every aspect of your dispute in detail to better your chances of a resolution.
Unishippers’ dedicated team of shipping consultants are available to help you effectively dispute any unwarranted fees on your business shipments. We even follow up with carriers on your behalf to ensure an efficient, pain-free resolution process. That’s just one way that we save our customers time, trouble and money.