



*freight accessorial fees:
the complete guide*

introduction

If you've ever taken a look at your final freight bill, and noticed unexpected charges, you're not alone. These extra fees are most likely for accessorial services, which include anything deemed outside of "normal" services provided by the carrier. Accessorial charges are one of the top complaints of freight shippers and the most common factor in billing discrepancies. But knowing what extra costs your freight is likely to incur, whether LTL or truckload, will help you plan ahead so you can avoid that freight bill double take.





why do carriers charge for accessorials?

Accessorials aren't just a money-maker for carriers – they are actually compensation for the extra time and effort a carrier must make to accommodate a shipper. A carrier's main responsibility is simply the pick-up, transport, and delivery of your freight. Whether you are using LTL or truckload services, your shipment may require supplementary resources, and these are going to cost you. The need for freight transportation is at an all-time high, but there are not enough carriers to meet the need for available loads. Because of this, carriers are cracking down with accessorial fees in order to eliminate problematic (unprofitable) shipments.

what are the most common LTL accessorials fees?

LTL transportation is a unique type of service that requires a shipment to travel across a network of different checkpoints within a set lane. Because these shipments are traveling through different terminals, some types of accessorials may be more applicable than others. It's always best to contact a carrier directly to answer questions on whether a certain accessorial may apply to your shipment. While you may not be able to eliminate these charges from your bill, knowing what fees you're likely to incur will make it easier to protect your bottom line.





liftgate

A liftgate is a mechanical device on the back of a truck that will raise or lower freight to the ground or up into the trailer. It's used most often when a shipping or receiving location does not have a loading dock or the equipment to safely move freight, such as with residential locations. Not every truck is equipped with a liftgate, so it's absolutely necessary to inform the carrier when scheduling a pick-up. The charge for liftgate service is determined by the carrier. While it may not be avoidable, it is helpful to be familiar with your pick-up and delivery locations. If there isn't a dock, or a forklift in order to do the loading and unloading, know to build the price of the accessorial into your customer's price.

inside pick-up/delivery

One of the biggest mistakes a shipper can make is thinking that LTL shipments are just “bigger” small package or ground shipments, when they are actually totally different services. As mentioned in the liftgate example, any extra handling by the driver beyond simply getting a shipment where it needs to go is going to cost extra. That means you must have a team ready and waiting for loading and unloading. The driver may offer to help unload your shipment, or bring it into a warehouse or storefront, but you will receive a charge for this extra effort. You can circumvent this issue by having a trained team ready for the truck’s arrival, and inform your customer or delivery location to do the same.





residential/limited access

Residential locations are those that are zoned by carriers as “residential” rather than a business, even if it’s a business run off of a residential property. A limited access location is very open to interpretation depending on the freight carrier, but generally refers to any location that can be difficult to get to during the business day. This can be due to odd hours, its physical location, security clearance, or any other number of factors. Types of limited access locations include churches, prisons, schools, construction sites, military bases, and farms. This type of accessorial can be difficult to anticipate, since each carrier may be different, so it’s important for shippers to research how different carriers have classified each shipping location in the past.

oversized/excessive length

As capacity tightens, carriers are trying to free up space on available trucks by limiting large or difficult-to-move shipments. Each carrier limits different sizes and lengths of shipments, and fee amounts vary up to hundreds of dollars. Certain carriers and terminals may prohibit shipments exceeding a certain threshold completely. So, it's important for shippers to do proper research into carrier tariffs, and check with local terminals to be absolutely sure you won't have a missed pick-up, or hundreds of dollars of fees.





call before/appointment for delivery

This type of fee is also commonly associated with residential locations where someone may not always be available for delivery. If a carrier has to call and schedule a time that works for the consignee (delivery location), this extra step involving the delivery terminal will cost extra. It may offset the inconvenience of a missed delivery, however, so the best thing a shipper can do is communicate with the delivery location to make sure hours of operation are understood and verify a team will be ready. It's important to note as well that a call before service must be noted on the BOL and include an accurate shipping contact and number.

sort and segregation

These fees are most commonly associated with freight being delivered to grocers, distribution centers, and warehouses and apply to shipments that require extra handling by the driver at delivery. This can include separating different pallet items, transferring product into storage, or racking in a warehouse, among other requirements set in place by the warehouse. Once more, additional handling = additional fees. It's difficult to avoid this sort of fee, since it's the nature of the business location, but being aware of the fee on the front-side will help set expectations.





after-hours pick-up/delivery

Similar to those places requiring appointments, if the shipment must travel to or from a location that operates outside of normal business hours, it will require the carrier to make an extra effort to make the haul. Just like the sort and segregation fees, this commonly affects grocer, distribution, and warehouse locations since they prefer to receive product before or after operating hours. Since it's difficult to dictate what hours these types of locations operate, shippers must be mindful that these types of shipments incur fees with every freight carrier.

storage fees

A storage fee is often unanticipated and may be completely unavoidable, since it occurs mid transit. Most often, storage fees apply if a shipment is in transit, but must be held at a terminal because the delivery location isn't prepared to accept the delivery. This can occur because the consignee isn't equipped with the proper tools, a team isn't ready to unload, or because they are simply refusing the freight. Usually, a carrier will assess a daily fee, depending on how long the shipment must be held at the delivery terminal. In order to avoid this charge, communication with the delivery location is a shipper's first line of defense. Keep a good relationship with open dialogue, check in periodically, and be aware of shipment tracking so that being unprepared is not an option.





what are common truckload accessorials?

Truckload freight transport is an interesting service type comprised of regional and national carrier networks. Because many of these transportation providers are owner-operator lines, it's really at the discretion of that particular carrier if they charge for an accessorial and for how much. However, being aware of what the common accessorial types are makes it easier for shippers to keep costs down.

detention

By and large the most common truckload accessorial fee, detention is a huge headache to carriers and hits shippers' wallets the hardest. Typically, both the shipper and receiver are allotted two hours for loading and another two for unloading their freight. Anything beyond that, and it's up to the carrier to charge what they will, usually in an hourly fee. Detention can be a problem for everyone involved, including any shipments the carrier may need to pick up later on. If the truck is running late at a delivery, chances are, it will run late for its next pick-up – creating a ripple effect that will delay any other shipments down the line. The best way to be sure you don't accumulate detention charges is to have your experienced team ready and waiting to load or unload the truck. Work efficiently and quickly. Another tip – do not allow the carrier to check in until the start time you have given for your hours of operation. Sometimes, a carrier will arrive early, and if they are allowed to check in, the countdown has begun.





driver assist

Just as in LTL shipments, a truckload carrier is simply hired to securely move freight from one destination to the other. In the event that a driver is asked to assist in loading or unloading the freight in any way, your freight bill will cost you more. This can be negotiated either before the shipment is picked up or encountered at the time the driver arrives at the dock, but be aware the driver will be more likely to help out and be lenient with extra fees if they know beforehand.

TONU (Truck Order Not Used)

Another common truckload accessorial, this fee occurs when a pick-up is requested, terms are accepted, and the request is then cancelled or called off. The time allotted before a fee is assessed varies. Sometimes a carrier will charge right away, while others may give more leeway. The fee amount can also vary, up to hundreds of dollars depending how far along the truck is in transit. If you are setting up the shipment and procuring a carrier, it is critical to determine the freight is ready whether you are the pick-up location or not. Most TONU fees occur because of a misunderstanding or lack of communication between the shipper and whomever is arranging the transportation.





diversion miles/additional stops

Sometimes, a carrier may pick up a load and need to split the delivery between a few different locations. This type of move will often require additional fees implemented by the carrier per stop. Most times, the fees are calculated on a per mile basis, though some carriers may charge a set amount for each stop on top of that. This type of haul should really be negotiated before the shipment is loaded and rolling, so that the driver can best plan the route beforehand and keep costs down. It's important to keep shipping paperwork and all Bills of Lading clear so there are no mix-ups during deliveries.

event shipments

Shipping freight to and from something as time sensitive as a tradeshow can be tricky due to tight deadlines, restricted windows for arrival and loading, and the massive amounts of clearance and paperwork required for check-in. Event shipment carriers may charge fees or even higher base rates knowing the difficulties involved. They may also pass on additional truckload accessorial charges such as detention or driver assist, depending on what is required once they've arrived at show site. While it's tempting for shippers to use dedicated carriers for these types of shipments because they typically travel quickly and with more security, it's very important to use an experienced and knowledgeable truckload provider who is familiar with the challenges of event shipping. If you are using a truckload service for an event shipment, make sure you are aware of all potential pitfalls the carrier may encounter and plan accordingly, with a reliable carrier and a solid plan of action.



in conclusion

As the demand for freight transportation services continues to increase, carriers will persistently charge fees for shipments that require more effort. These shipments redirect time and effort away from efficiently moving other shipments through the network quickly, so doing all you can to set your shipment up for success will help avoid these extra costs. While accessorial fees aren't always avoidable, clear communication, double-checking your shipment requirements, and being transparent about your pick-up and delivery locations can help lessen any surprise costs on your final freight bill.



about us

Sometimes, shippers simply don't know what they don't know. That's where we come in. PartnerShip® freight specialists are here to help answer any questions you may have about your shipping, and gauge whether your shipping processes make you vulnerable to incurring accessorial shipping fees. We help streamline your shipping so your business can operate efficiently while saving money. Contact us today to ship smarter.

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