



ROGERS
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GLOBAL VIEW

Notes

CLIFFS NOTES

for International Shipping Instructions



By Michelle Bruno

It's a well-known fact that not all exhibitors read exhibitor manuals cover to cover. In fact, most read only a few essential pages—just enough to get by. When it comes to international shipping instructions, it's quite possible that exhibitors read even less of the important information required to get merchandise to and from an overseas show. A way to solve such a dilemma would be the invention of **CliffsNotes** for shipping instructions. However, since they don't yet exist (probably because most CliffsNotes are abbreviated volumes of great literary works), this article highlights the most important information in a set of international shipping instructions.

Deadline dates

Deadline dates should be the first section of the shipping instructions to be read. The dates by which documentation and freight must be received at the designated offices or consolidation points are carefully calculated based on the show dates, shipping schedules, estimated time required for customs clearance, and the mode of transport. In most cases, missing a deadline date is **NOT** cause for alarm but it will increase the likelihood of either more expense or the chance that an

unplanned event could affect the timing of the delivery to the exhibition.

In some cases, adherence to deadline dates is extremely critical. The warehouses in some countries (Brazil, for example) charge very high rates for the storage of goods at the airports and ports. In such cases, the deadline dates are devised to minimize the amount of time that the freight is on the ground at the destination. When deadline dates in the U.S. are missed, the shipment is immediately at risk of missing the show. Sometimes there is no possibility to clear shipments even on overtime (such as during a holiday or weekend) or when a labor strike impedes the movement of cargo to the show site.

Consignment details

The commercial invoice and bill of lading are the most important shipping documents for the majority of international shipments. Both must be consigned (ship to and notify parties) in a very specific manner. The incorrect consignment of documents can immediately halt clearance procedures until the documents are amended—a time consuming process. Options for the consignment of exhibition shipments vary from country to country. Some customs authorities require that shipments be consigned to an importer of record, others ask that they be addressed to the ultimate

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destination (convention center). The commercial invoice is normally consigned differently than the bill of lading.

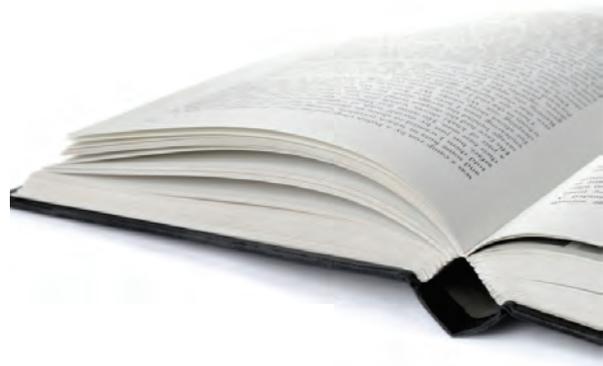
Commercial invoices and packing lists

This section of the shipping instructions is more or less critical depending on the destination country. Some countries (such as Mexico) insist that the exact items (quantity, serial/model numbers, harmonized tariff classifications) listed on the invoice are packed in the boxes. Border inspections revealing a discrepancy (office supplies thrown in at the last minute and not listed on the invoice, for example) can stop clearance procedures.

Another important detail in this section of the shipping instructions is the separation of permanent and temporary import items. Brochures and giveaways must always be packed and invoiced separately from machinery, stand fittings, and any other items that are scheduled for re-exportation. These items are invoiced and packed separately because they require two different types of customs clearance procedures—duty paid (permanent import) and non-duty paid (temporary import).

Temporary import requirements

This section becomes extremely important when the shipment includes high value equipment that is scheduled for re-exportation to the country of origin. The requirements for obtaining a temporary import permit vary from country to country. Depending on the destination, a customs broker, foreign representative or the U.S. Embassy is tasked with providing the import guarantee to facilitate the clearance process. If arrangements for a temporary import permit are not made in advance, the shipment is subject to duty and taxes.



Packing and labeling

For sensitive equipment or shipments to countries with inadequate indoor storage (China, for example), packing instructions are critical. In addition, correct labeling can mean the difference between making and missing the show. Shipments are handled by a minimum of five different entities in the course of shipping internationally (trucking companies, warehouse personnel, airfreight or steamship line, customs authorities, drayage personnel, etc.). It is critical that the shipments are labeled with the exhibitor name, booth number, show name, destination city and country at the very least.

If CliffsNotes for international shipping instructions existed, they would contain the above five sections. However, just like any literary masterpiece worthy of having CliffsNotes, there is much more to the story than can be gleaned from a thin summary of the characters and plot—even if the full volume is a snooze. Exhibitors truly interested in the regulations, procedures, nuances and details of shipping to an international trade show or those shipping food, alcohol, firearms and hazardous materials should read the instructions cover to cover. If that exercise is too painful, choosing an experienced international exhibition logistics partner is a must.

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