

# Five Trucker Tips for Dock Efficiency

An LTL carrier's success depends on the shipper's, and it begins and ends at a critical point of intersection: the freight dock.

**By Thomas Clark**

**S**hippers and carriers share high standards—and stakes—in the competitive and ever-changing less-than-truckload (LTL) freight transportation industry. Consistent peak performance requires operating as efficiently as possible without compromising safety, reliability or quality.

There are several steps shippers and carriers can take to guarantee freight pickups and deliveries occur as swiftly as possible.

*The following five procedures are critical to developing and maintaining dock efficiency:*

**1. Collaborate and Communicate.** To meet shippers' expectations, LTL carriers need freight that travels well and fits into their system while packaging provides ample protection. That's a team effort.

# MOVE

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**2. Label everything.** Precautionary markings provide immediate, damage-preventing instructions. Freight comes in all shapes and sizes with varying levels of fragility. If a package cannot be tipped, double-stacked or laid on its side, it should be accurately labeled as such. Additionally, some shipments require the use of special equipment, such as extended forklift blades for “long” shipments. To ensure swift and proper handling, carriers can supply stickers to the shipper or shippers can purchase pre-stamped packaging materials.

**3. Verify all freight on the bill of lading.** Verifying that all of the freight being transported — including accurate piece counts — is reflected properly on the bill of lading helps carriers and shippers validate all necessary information to ensure accurate, timely and complete delivery. Descriptions should be accurate and specific to prevent damage and lost freight. To streamline this process, carriers can provide shippers with standardized bills of lading.

**4. Shrink-wrap the freight and the pallet.** One of

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the most important methods to avoid wasted time and damage to products is to secure products on pallets using shrink wrap. The better shippers can “unitize” and secure multiple cartons on a pallet, preventing cartons from shifting or slipping during transit, the better they will stand up to the rigors of transit through an LTL system. Effective shrink-wrap technique is the single-most effective measure a shipper can use to protect their goods, ensure an exception-free delivery, and enable their LTL carrier to handle the goods safely, efficiently and securely.

**5. Know and Follow the Rules.** Finally, consulting the National Motor Freight Classification (NMFC) standards

provides insight and information to help shippers move freight safely and securely. The NMFC guide provides commodity descriptions, transportation rules, bill of lading formats and packaging requirements. To achieve the highest levels of efficiency on the road and on the dock, it is critical that shippers and carriers are aligned and working out of the same playbook. Full details about the NMFC standards can be found on the National Motor Freight Traffic Association’s Web site, [www.NMFTA.org](http://www.NMFTA.org). **MH&I.**

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