

THE UK EXPERIENCE IN LOGISTICS FOR SPECIAL DESPATCHES: EXHIBITION GOODS AND HAZARDOUS CARGO

Some goods require special handling, because they are delicate or they pose a potential danger. Some types of special despatches can be sent together with other goods but the documentary requirements are different. This is the case with exhibition goods and hazardous cargo.

Great care must be taken with special despatches. Inadequate or incorrect documentation may delay the goods or the importer may be obliged to pay unnecessary custom duties.

The transport of dangerous goods needs to be undertaken with particular care, as any accident during transport can lead to appalling injuries or death. The range of goods classified as dangerous is extremely wide, although the largest single category consists of chemicals. Yet for transport purposes, many products normally considered quite harmless are classified as hazardous. Thus, whisky and other spirits are considered hazardous if they are packed in containers with a capacity of more than five litres. Nail varnish and shampoo also become hazardous commodities for transport purposes. These products are liable to ignite or give off a vapour which can damage other cargoes in certain circumstances. Other chemicals, notably acids, are corrosive.

Shippers of dangerous goods must always declare them before dispatch. Handling hazardous goods is more expensive for carriers, so in most cases a hazardous surcharge justifiably applies.

With prior warning, dangerous chemicals will be accepted for shipment by air, road and sea, although each mode of transport has different regulations.

The first step for the manufacturer is to provide full details of the shipment to the freight forwarder who will be able to provide the information about the special procedures to be adopted. These rules relate to packaging and clear labelling of the cargo as well as any restrictions regarding transport. The onus is on the shipper to provide all the necessary information. Any failure on the part of the shipper to notify the transport operator about the nature of a hazard could lead to prosecution.

Exhibitions around the world are becoming increasingly popular as a way of marketing products overseas. As many UK exporters are eligible for a subsidy from the British Overseas Trade Board, most British exporters will be involved in an overseas exhibition from time to time.

The perennial nightmare for any exhibitors is the thought of their expensive stand attracting special attention just because it is empty! Such

disasters can be avoided by adopting a few basic rules and making sure that certain procedures are followed on every occasion. The first rule is to allow sufficient time for goods to reach the exhibition hall and not to underestimate the time required. If, for example, the exhibition is being held in Hong Kong, and the intention is to send the goods by sea, the transit time is between 25 and 35 days depending on the shipping line used. No line, however, operates a daily service, so goods will be held at the dock for several days. Once the vessel has arrived in Hong Kong, allow a few days for delivery to the exhibition hall and erection of the stand. The same rules apply to air freight. Although much quicker, it is likely that the cargo will wait at the airport for one or two days before departure, particularly if the consignment is large and cannot be accommodated on a passenger flight.

The main additional documentation requirement for exhibition goods is an ATA carnet, often referred to simply as a carnet. The carnet is a widely recognized international document which permits goods to be imported temporarily into a foreign country without the payment of any import duty or taxes. If the goods are then sold, normal taxes become payable. Failure to have a carnet available may lead to delays, and the shipper will certainly have to pay the appropriate duty and taxes, even if this is refunded once the goods have left the country again.

Carnets are issued by chambers of commerce who can also advise exhibitors of any other required documents. The use of a carnet does not preclude the need for the normal forms such as invoices, packing lists and

Certificates of origin. As with all other shipments, local conditions vary and exhibitors should consult *Croner's Reference Book for Exporters*.

Major exhibition organisers overseas will usually nominate a freight forwarder as the official forwarder for the event, and this company or their UK agent will approach exhibitors direct and offer their services. There is no obligation to use the official forwarder, but you may find this service more convenient. The alternative is to seek out a firm which specializes in handling exhibition shipments. Several highly reputable freight forwarders, such as the Lep Group, have specialized divisions which deal exclusively with exhibitions around the world. Resident experts can advise on all transport and documentation aspects regarding the shipment and provide an all-inclusive price for the dispatch and return of the goods. The wide experience of such firms means that their customers avoid the heartbreak of an empty stand. UK importers will also want to receive exhibition goods occasionally for a UK event. The responsibility for arranging the shipment will often be taken by the overseas supplier, and again it is important to ensure that a carnet accompanies the goods when they come into the UK and upon their departure.