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## TRADE SHOW EXHIBIT SHIPPING TIPS

Your trade show costs can dramatically escalate if you just happen to hire an inexperienced shipping company to transport your trade show booth to the conference site. You may suddenly be faced with broken or missing parts, late delivery and a budget that could put your company's trade show display in total disarray and your job in jeopardy.

Although unforeseen events such as a major winter blizzard can cause havoc with your trade show delivery schedule and budgeting, it is always best to minimize your chances for error by picking the right professional transportation company. If you want your trade show booth to arrive in good condition, on time and within your budgeted allowance, you need to be informed on how to pick the right freight handler and transportation company.

You can take control of your trade show booth's destiny by becoming fully informed.

Bad weather, causing flight delays at certain times of the year, is a concern beyond your control. But just like you can reclaim lost luggage from an airliner if you have your name tag on it, you have a better chance of finding a lost or misplaced trade show booth element if, for example, you labeled every part of your trade show display in advance.

Although GPS technology has been a boon to tracking trade show booths, it can't find what is not labeled. And, since there are so many different people handling the shipment of a trade show booth, there is no guarantee that your trade show exhibit will arrive safely on the other end. You can, however, improve your odds of success by taking steps to insure your trade show display's safe journey. Thus, the first step is to find an experienced trade show specific carrier.

George Poppe of National Transportation in El Segundo, California, offers the following tips on what to look for in a trade show freight carrier. They are:

1. Make sure your transportation company records all of your trade show exhibit information, such as destination, schedule, weight, number of pieces, and exact dimensions of your pieces. This detailed information not only determines the cost of transporting your trade show booth to the exhibit site but also drayage costs (what the unions charge to deliver your booth from the loading dock onto and off the trade show floor)
2. Look for a freight carrier that has a good rapport with the unions so your trade show exhibit will be in reliable hands. You are better able to avoid unnecessary charges if your transportation carrier deals regularly with the trade show conference hall unions. Your carrier benefits from knowing the industry venues well--whether they be the McCormick Convention Center in Chicago, the Kaiser Convention Center in Oakland, the Moscone Center in San Francisco, the Santa Clara Convention Center or the San Jose McEnergy Convention Center.
3. Look for a transportation company that handles a large volume of trade show business. You can get price breaks if your cargo company has multiple or less than truck load shipments to a convention site. An example of what can happen is the recent Semicon West 2006 Convention at Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco July 11 -13th.

Poppe reported that, due to the popularity of this show, his National Transportation Company had to wait in the marshalling yard for 11 hours before delivery at the unloading dock. Because he had 3 trucks and multiple shipments, he was able to waive the waiting charge fees which would normally be charged. A less experienced trucker most likely would pass along these charges to the trade show exhibitor. Marshal yard fees range anywhere from \$45 - \$85 hour.

4. Select a trade show freight company that has first class communication capability. Check to see if they offer 24/7 contact with a live person, since trade shows are not a 9 to 5 business. Also make sure you give them contact names and cell phone numbers of your exhibitor reps on the trade show floor. Check to see if the freight company has the capability of sending Internet air bills and bill of lading in case an air bill is lost and you need a duplicate copy immediately.

Poppe suggests that once you select your freight company, you should ship 7 – 10 days ahead of your targeted move in date in order to avoid late penalties. And be sure to also communicate your trade show exhibit details with the company you select to do your trade show installation and dismantling. It's really all about communicating.

Remember, do your homework in advance and know what you can do to avoid major mishaps of shipping your trade show booth. By picking an experienced freight company, you can minimize your exposure to mislaid or damaged trade show booth components and budget cost overruns.