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- Focus on Mexico

- Assess the total transportation route and pack for the toughest leg;
- Determine the frequency of transshipment, and of unloading and reloading: prepare the goods for multiple handling;
- Weather conditions that may be experienced in transit. Extreme temperatures can damage many types of products.
- Determine the packaging requirements that apply in the country of origin, for each carrier, at all ports of exit and entry, and in the country of destination;
- Know the capabilities of the packaging, the strengths and weaknesses of the goods contained in it, its "stackability," and its susceptibility to weather;
- Package the goods to minimize internal movement and to protect corners, edges, finishes, valves, dials and knobs, or upholstery and material;
- Determine the kind of handling equipment to be used and its availability at transshipment points, pack for the equipment and its capabilities;
- Protection against theft during transit. Proper packing can reduce the threat of pilferage.

SHIPPING NOTES

Orders must be tracked and monitored at every step of the process until they are delivered to the customer. This is a customer service responsibility. The necessary information must be provided in the order system so tracking can be managed in a timely and effective manner.

Order monitoring steps might include:

- order entered;
- credit approved;
- order picked by warehouse complete as ordered;
- order shipped with associated carrier information;
- in-transit de-consolidations, transfers and border crossings; and
- order delivered to customer.

SHIPPING

There are four ways to get goods from Canada to Mexico: road, rail, ship and air. Of these, road transport is the most popular. In 1993, about half of Canada's exports to Mexico went by road. Based on the volume of merchandise shipped, the most important Mexican ports of entry are:

- Veracruz and Tampico-Altamira on the Gulf of Mexico, for maritime traffic;
- Manzanillo and Acapulco on the Pacific Coast, for maritime traffic;
- Tijuana in the northwest and Nuevo Laredo in the northeast, for land-based traffic; and
- Mexico City International Airport for air shipments.

In spite of recent improvements, Mexico's transportation and communication infrastructure is still poorly developed. Shipments can be delayed at the border for seemingly minor errors in paperwork. Telephone service is unreliable and expensive, and modern data communications are still new to Mexico.

Choice of transport depends on a combination of factors including the nature of the product, the costs involved, the time it takes to move the goods, the complexity of the procedures involved, and the provision of any additional services. Exporters can purchase transportation services directly through a trucking company, railway, airline cargo office or marine shipping agent, or else they can deal with a freight forwarder.