

Shipping to Exhibitions in the USA.

Exhibitions are about as time critical as it gets. Failure to get your stand/product to the exhibition site in good time can be a life (and career) changing moment. When shipping goods to exhibitions it is vitally important to plan ahead. Here are some of the basic things to consider.

Firstly, have a clear idea of what you intend to do with your exhibition goods and stand once the exhibition is over. This may appear to be counterintuitive, but your plans after the exhibition will determine how the goods will be cleared in the USA. For example if you plan to return the goods back to the UK you may choose to use an ATA carnet, or you might consider clearing the goods under a temporary import bond. Alternatively, it may be worth just paying the US duties/taxes upon importation.

“Carnet’s “and Temporary Import Bonds both have strict conditions (and costs) attached to them and they are both time limited. Sometimes (subject to the value of the goods and the duty rate payable) it is simpler and cheaper to just pay the US import duty. Don’t forget for some goods the duty rate is zero.

It is imperative to have a clear idea of when the goods need to be at the exhibition. There are normally two critical receiving date ranges contained in the exhibition pack provided by the exhibition organisers. They are the advance warehouse dates and the direct delivery dates. It is preferable (and certainly less stressful) to aim for the advance warehouse dates, knowing that if there is a delay of some kind, the direct delivery dates can be used as a fall back.

Once you have established the exhibition receiving dates its time to contact a freight forwarder, ideally one who is used to handling exhibition shipments. The freight forwarder should be able to give a reasonable estimate of the total transit time. The transit time should include some allowance for delay with either the transport or with customs clearance. An experienced freight forwarder will follow the shipment right through to final delivery and will act proactively to anticipate and overcome any delays.

If you are sending goods to an exhibition, planning ahead is critical. As the saying goes “if you fail to plan, then plan to fail”. My advice is simple - plan ahead, use an experienced freight forwarder who understands exhibitions, and ship early. Failure is not an option.