Global Shipping Conditions - 1st November 2026

STATE OF THE MARKET:

Operational disturbances

The conflict in the Middle East continues to cause disruptions to shipping in the region, while interim ceasefires and diplomatic talks periodically stabilize routes through the Strait of Hormuz, shipping lines continue to implement widespread booking suspensions and costly diversions.

Shipments to the Middle East have seen the reintroduction of some services, utilising alternative routings into the region.

However, these services are very fluid and continue to be withdrawn and then reinstated, this usually due to congestion at the revised transit ports, who are not equipped to handle the scale of volume now being diverted to them.

New routings, often involving an overland leg have high additional costs which vary on a continuous basis, meaning long term quotes are impossible. Likewise, the rates in place prior to the conflict are no longer being honoured by shipping lines, which may see previous quotes from movers increase significantly.

Often, and despite assurances from shipping lines that all costs had been charged we are still seeing additional charges being invoiced, these can be after the container has been discharged and often directly to the destination agent. So, movers and consumers must both understand that shipping lines can and do apply additional charges.

Despite the ongoing conflict, many consumers remain eager to move, however they need to understand that unexpected delays, and higher costs are all but inevitable and are at no control of the moving company. Any new shipments also run the risk of being stranded at alternate ports either under end of voyage or Force majeure, if the conflict escalates or carriers are unable to offer services.

Bunker (fuel) increases are forcing freight rates and inland haulage costs, across all trades higher, driven but the rising cost of oil caused by the conflict. In addition to War Risks and Emergency fuel surcharges on freight, carriers have now begun to introduce operational surcharges which relate to pass through costs from terminals or feeder operators. These surcharges are often immediate and may well not have been quoted by your moving company.

The consumer must appreciate that the moving company is basing quotes on services that are currently offered, if a shipping line suddenly removes a vessel string, changes or omits its UK port of load, or reroutes the vessel. The mover will need to move the booking to an alternative service which may well have a higher freight cost and potentially longer transit time, but this is totally outside the movers control.

We are also seeing all to often containers due to sail on a vessel not being loaded, meaning they are rolled to the next vessel causing delays and adding to the congestion at ports. Again, all of this is outside the mover's control.

Additionally, the shipping lines may well implement surcharges to pass these additional costs to the shipper and consumer, and these can be applied with very short notice. Meaning costs can change between the mover quoting the consumer and when the shipment actually departs.

Congestion & Delays

Many transhipment ports on the Europe continent and Asia are congested, this means shippers may well experience delays outside the control of the mover.

Suez Canal

Following careful assessment the Gemini Cooperation which includes Hapag-Lloyd have decided to introduce changes to their services NE4, SE1, SE2 and IEX. These services will now transition to sailing via the Red Sea route though the Suez Canal, instead of transiting via the Cape of Good Hope.

If these limited services prove successful it is likely we will see other carriers start to follow suit, however if hostilities resume they can be withdrawn.

Equipment availability and condition

We are seeing a shortage of 20' containers in the UK. Shipping Lines are relying on empty returns to service bookings, but as they are currently exporting more than they are importing, the situation is not improving.

Consequently, if a consumer's goods are being moved in 20ft container, there is the possibility that despite the booking being accepted, a container fails to be available on the load date. This failure will cause delays, usually resulting in the shipment being rolled to a later vessel, all outside the mover's control.

Consumers, who's load dates require the residence to be vacated promptly, should be wary, as a failure will likely result in additional charges as the mover tries to cover the shipping lines failure, by moving goods to a warehouse, while awaiting a replacement container.

We've also seen an increase in shipping lines supplying unusable containers, the moving company isn't aware of their unsuitability until the container arrives on site. If an unsuitable container is supplied it will need to be rejected, and the shipping line is often not able to supply a replacement the same day. If the consumer needs to vacate the property, the moving company will have no choice but to move the goods to store, likely incurring additional charges, through no fault of their own. Additionally, the shipment will likely suffer delays being rolled to a later vessel, again all outside the moving company's control.

Transit Times

The above issues are impacting the carrier's ability to maintain their advertised transit times, and there are often vast deviations between vessels. For example, a sailing from Southampton to Sydney Australia, can take anywhere between 56 and 89 days, before considering delays, depending on the selected vessel. As vessels are often chosen based on a consumers load date, there is difficultly ensuring the selection of the faster service. And even if booked on the faster service, there is always the possibility the cargo will be rolled on to the next vessel which could well be a slower service.

North America from Europe (shipments to USA, Canada & Mexico)

The Trans-Atlantic trade remains oversubscribed in that customer demand is now greater than the carrier's vessel capacity. Consequently, this causes rates to increase, and delays and cancellations to become more common.

The most noticeable challenge to someone moving, will be the increased notice required to secure space on a vessel, and the inevitability of delays. The likelihood of a container being rolled, left off its intended vessel and moved to a later vessel, or total cancellation of the booking, if this happens it is totally outside of the mover's control.

Eastbound trades from Europe (shipments to Asia, Oceania, India, and Middle East).

The diversion around the Cape of Good Hope for Eastbound trades due to conflict in the region is now well established and schedules are usually followed. Consumers should understand for Eastbound trades the now longer transit times are the norm, and there is still no estimate as to when passage through the Suez Canal will be safe.

However, the omission of Middle East calls on some of the shipping lines services to Asia, are beginning to severely impact services to this region. The services that call Middle East ports are extremely full and void sailings where carriers realign their services are causing a backlog of shipments.

Similarly, for shipments to Oceania, we are again seeing some congestion in the Transhipment ports in Asia, which has been causing some containers to be rolled multiple times, with the associated delays this causes.

Mediterranean services are also being affected, as carriers limit their services into the Med as the traditional route onwards through Suez is not possible so vessels have to turn around and return. This has caused ports to be omitted and longer transit times.

Consequently, the most noticeable challenge to someone moving, will be the possibility of the increased notice required to secure space on a vessel, and the inevitability of increased transits times or delays. Additionally, the likelihood of a container being rolled, left off its intended vessel and moved to a later vessel is increasing as shipping lines manage their volumes, if this happens it is totally outside of the mover's control.

Lastly this is a very fluid situation, shipping lines are often reacting to unexpected developments so the situation can always change rapidly.

It's suggested that customers be transparent and plan moving dates in advance with their chosen mover to allow sufficient time to book appropriate vessels, move belongings and ensure their moving schedule is met.

Southbound trades from Europe (South, East, and West Africa):

No change. Where a shipping Line does offer a service on a given route to this area, it is usually quite reliable. However, many hinterland destinations (usually served via main ports with overland on-carriage to inland freight terminals) have been removed from the Shipping Line schedules because of lengthy main port congestion and or poor on-carrying transport infrastructure. This has caused a reduction of the main destination ports of call coverage across much of this region, especially the Indian Ocean Islands.

Latin America trades from Europe (South America East & West Coasts & Caribbean):

No change. Where a shipping Line does offer a service on a given route to this area, it is usually quite reliable. But for these destinations, the clearance and release of a container can take a substantial amount of time, which is usually longer than the free storage a shipping line offers. Consequently, storage charges may accrue.

Ultimately, severe service challenges, short-notice changes to container bookings, and variable freight rates, despite downward trends, will be reflected in your BAR mover's inter-continental door-to-door quotation and terms.

DEVELOPMENTS

ICS2 refers to Import Control System 2, which is the European Union's updated system for pre-arrival safety and security declarations for goods entering or transiting the EU. It is an EU requirement where any shipment, who's vessel docks at an EU port following its departure from the UK will need to provide information regarding the shipper of the goods. Therefore, consumers should be aware that moving companies may well need to request more sometimes personal information, however this is at the behest of the EU or shipping line and out of the moving companies' control. We have seen the EU add the "HHG and Personal effects" commodity description to its watch list, and while legitimate shipments currently should not be affected, consumers should be that a shipping line or the EU may reject a perfectly valid commodity code, which may cause delays while the mover works through a solution.

The Environment Agency retains the authority to inspect and stop any container, it suspects may be shipping goods classified as waste. This is completely out of control of your moving company, but consumers are reminded the time wasted and the storage charges accrued should their container be inspected are not insignificant.

The quality of container equipment utilised by shipping lines has diminished, largely due to the additional number of containers needed to service Asia via Cape of Good Hope. The frequency, where a container is delivered, that is unsuitable for the transport of Household goods, which the mover will be obliged to reject, has risen dramatically. While another container will usually be provided, this can result in delays, missed vessels and additional haulage charges, through no fault of the mover.

Shipping Line ONE LINE has just confirmed that they will not ship personal effects of assignees holding Russian passports. We are still reaching out to other shipping lines for their positions. But Russian passport holders need to be cautious when planning to move and ensure that the shipping line used can clear their goods at destination. As the accrued storage charges should there be a dispute could be significant.

We have heard of some shippers experiencing issues with loading fridge's and freezers with shipping lines. While both Hapag Lloyd and ONE Line have confirmed they can carry them, they caveated this acceptance, with the shipper being responsible for declaring them as hazardous if and when necessary. Consequently, any misdeclaration could be met with fines, and or the need to remove the goods from the container.

UK HAULAGE

The recent container road-haulage challenges due to a lack of drivers experienced across the UK has much improved in response to easing demand, with the majority of shipping lines withdrawing their Driver Retention surcharge (DRS). During the prior driver shortage, most moves were transhipped from van to sea-container, via loading at the movers warehouse, which safeguarded against substantial additional costs associated with a container no show at the customers residence. Whilst the preference is to direct load containers at customer residence whenever possible, it must be noted that most container-hauliers prefer the certainty of collecting from the movers warehouse. This is particularly the case in and around busy cities with difficult parking,

poor access to residence and increasing prevalence of Low Emission Zone surcharges. So, customers are cautioned that direct residence loading is prone to container no-shows or last-minute rejections, whereas loading via the mover's warehouse offers much greater certainty.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE DIFFERENCES

Shipping Line's container-freight rates and ancillary charges are usually quoted by them in foreign currency, mainly US Dollars and Euros for sea-freight, and local destination currency for port and on-carriage charges. These 'freight charges' are, however, payable in British Pounds (GBP) and converted typically at time of the ships' sailing date, applying the currency exchange rate at that point in time. BAR Movers generally will include these container-freight costs in their GBP quotation offered to the customer using the indicative exchange rate(s) valid at the time of their quotation. Customers should therefore expect an adjustment of the mover's final invoice versus quotation, reflecting the actual exchange rate applied by the Shipping Line at time of despatch. A BAR Mover has no control over the actual exchange rate used and applied by the Shipping Line.

FUEL COST CHANGES

Sea container freight contracts are subject to periodical ships fuel (bunkering) cost reviews. This is a mechanism applied by Shipping Lines which compares the average price of bunkering quarter-on-quarter and then adjusts the rate either up or down based on the change. With the well-publicised energy supply issues, bunkering increases adding to the overall sea-container freight cost are highly probable. We have seen increases as much as US Dollars 350 per container in recent examples.

PORT STRIKES

No strikes at UK Ports are currently scheduled that we are aware of, however customers should be aware of the impact of potential future strike actions which invariably cause unexpected delays to both outbound (export) and inbound (import) shipments, particularly the inbound UK customs clearance time and subsequent container deliveries.

LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES

The acceptance of 'Li-ION' batteries in household and personal effects shipments is a complicated subject. There is a widely reported increased fire risk associated with these batteries. Shipping Lines themselves are so far inconsistent in standardising their rules for their inclusion or exclusion from a consignment. Typically, we experience that Shipping Lines will decide on a shipment by shipment basis whether Li-ION batteries can be included. This extends to all and any items which may require such power units, examples include but not limited to cordless power tools, laptops, e-scooters, e-bikes and similar.

BAR Overseas Group recommends that Li-ION batteries are NOT shipped. If, however, you include them in your shipment, your moving company is likely required to declare the shipment as 'Hazardous Cargo'. This is not as simple as it sounds. Firstly, your mover must obtain the shipping line's permission to include *Li Ion Batteries as* hazardous cargo (not all carriers accept). Next, you will incur a substantial freight surcharge, driving up your cost of shipping. The rules for including hazardous material in a shipment are fastidious; it will also impact the time is takes to secure a confirmed container space booking on a ship.

The instances, where a shipment including a Li-ION battery is accepted with one shipping line, but scheduled to sail on a partner line vessel, which does not allow Li-ION batteries are becoming more common. The costs involved due to the significant delays or the requirement to return the container to remove the Li-ION batteries should this occur, can be substantial.

Failure to declare Li-ION batteries (or other hazardous goods) in a shipment, whether by intent or in error, is treated by the Shipping Line as a **misdeclaration**. This is a serious offence under maritime law and would lead to a substantial fine (payable by the customer) (currently circa 30,000 US Dollars); in addition, the Shipping Line could confiscate and dispose of the consignment.

IN CLOSING

We assure all customers that your BAR Overseas mover is highly experienced and will always use their best endeavours for an efficient and trouble-free overseas move. This update is intended to provide you with unbiased information on the state of shipping, and its many challenges. If you have any questions, please contact your BAR mover.