STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Freight Dispatch SOP

Document no.	SOP-LOG-003
Revision	1.0
Owner	Dispatch Manager
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To assign and track freight loads efficiently, keeping drivers, carriers and customers informed while catching delays or problems early enough to act on them.

2. Scope

Applies to assigning and tracking loads from booking through delivery confirmation, whether using company drivers or contracted carriers. Route planning detail and proof of delivery are covered by separate SOPs.

Definitions

TMS	Transportation Management System, the software used to book, assign, track and settle freight loads.
Hours of service	Regulatory limits on how many hours a driver may drive and work before a required rest period.
Detention	Time a driver is held at a pickup or delivery location beyond the agreed free time, which may trigger an additional charge.
Load tender	An offer of a load sent to a carrier or owner-operator for acceptance before dispatch is finalized.

3. Responsibilities

Dispatcher	Assigns loads, communicates with drivers and carriers, and tracks shipments through delivery.
Dispatch Manager	Resolves capacity shortages, approves exception decisions, and oversees on-time performance.
Driver	Accepts assigned loads, follows hours of service rules, and reports status and delays promptly.
Customer Service Representative	Communicates delivery status and delays to the customer or consignee.

RACI matrix

Activity	Dispatcher	Dispatch Manager	Driver	Customer Service Representative
Assign load to driver or carrier	R/A	A	I	-
Confirm hours of service	R	A	R	-

Activity	Dispatcher	Dispatch Manager	Driver	Customer Service Representative
availability				
Track load in transit	R/A	I	R	I
Resolve an in-transit exception	R	R/A	C	I
Notify customer of delay	C	A	I	R

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- TMS or load board terminal
- Load tender and rate confirmation documents
- Driver hours of service log or electronic logging device data
- Dispatch board or whiteboard for daily assignments
- Exception and delay log
- Carrier contact list

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Review the day's load board** At the start of the shift, review all open loads in the TMS, noting pickup windows, delivery appointments and any loads still needing a carrier or driver assigned.	Dispatcher	☐
5.2	**Match loads to available capacity** Match each load to an available driver or carrier based on location, equipment type, hours of service remaining and delivery deadline.	Dispatcher	☐
5.3	**Confirm hours of service availability** Check the driver's remaining drive and duty hours before assigning a load, confirming they can legally complete the pickup and delivery within the available window. **Checkpoint:** No load is assigned to a driver without confirmed remaining hours of service to complete it legally.	Dispatcher	☐
5.4	**Send the load tender** Send the load tender or dispatch instructions with pickup and delivery addresses, appointment times, reference numbers and special handling notes to the driver or carrier.	Dispatcher	☐
5.5	**Confirm acceptance** Obtain confirmation that the driver or carrier has accepted the load and understands the pickup time, and update the load status in the TMS to assigned.	Dispatcher	☐
5.6	**Verify pickup completion** Confirm with the driver that pickup occurred on time and the bill of lading or shipping documents were collected, and update the load status to in transit.	Driver	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.7	**Track the load in transit** Monitor the load's location and estimated arrival through the TMS or check-in calls at agreed intervals, comparing progress against the delivery appointment.	Dispatcher	☐
5.8	**Flag a developing delay** If tracking or a driver check-in shows the load is behind schedule, calculate the revised estimated arrival and flag the load as at risk before it becomes a missed appointment. **Checkpoint:** A load projected to miss its delivery appointment is flagged and escalated before the appointment window rather than after.	Dispatcher	☐
5.9	**Resolve an in-transit exception** For a breakdown, accident, weather delay or detention, gather details from the driver, decide on a resolution such as rerouting, a relay driver or rescheduling delivery, and log the exception. **Warning:** Never pressure a driver to exceed legal hours of service or skip a required rest break to make up time.	Dispatch Manager	☐
5.10	**Notify the customer of a delay** Notify the customer service representative of any material delay so the customer or consignee can be informed with a revised delivery estimate.	Dispatcher	☐
5.11	**Confirm delivery** Confirm delivery was completed and proof of delivery was captured, then close the load status in the TMS and release the driver or carrier for the next assignment.	Dispatcher	☐
5.12	**Review on-time performance** Review daily and weekly on-time pickup and delivery performance, noting recurring causes of delay by lane, carrier or customer for follow-up.	Dispatch Manager	☐

6. Quality checks

- No load is dispatched without confirmed driver hours of service availability.
- At-risk loads are flagged before the delivery appointment, not after it is missed.
- Every exception is logged with a resolution and communicated to the customer.
- Load status in the TMS reflects actual pickup, transit and delivery in real time.

7. Records

- Load tenders and rate confirmations
- Dispatch and tracking log in the TMS
- Exception and delay log
- On-time performance report

8. KPIs

- On-time pickup rate
- On-time delivery rate
- Average time to reassign an at-risk load
- Detention hours per load

9. Common mistakes

- Assigning a load without checking the driver's remaining hours of service.
- Waiting for the delivery appointment to pass before flagging a delay.
- Not documenting the reason for an in-transit exception, making trends hard to spot.
- Failing to notify the customer of a delay until they call asking about it.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Ilia Pirozhenko

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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