STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Warehouse Shipping SOP

Document no.	SOP-WHS-004
Revision	1.0
Owner	Shipping Supervisor
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To load and dispatch outbound freight accurately and safely, with complete documentation, so shipments reach the correct carrier on time and can be tracked if a problem arises.

2. Scope

Applies to outbound trailer and parcel loading from the shipping dock once orders have been packed and staged. Picking and packing are covered by a separate SOP.

Definitions

BOL	Bill of Lading, the shipping document that lists the freight, carrier and terms for a shipment and serves as a contract of carriage.
Manifest	The list of all packages or pallets being loaded onto a specific trailer or route for a carrier.
Load plan	The planned sequence and placement of freight inside a trailer, based on delivery stop order and weight distribution.
Freight class	The classification used to rate less-than-truckload freight for billing, based on density, handling and value.

3. Responsibilities

Shipping Clerk	Verifies staged freight, generates manifests and BOLs, and records the shipment in the WMS or TMS.
Shipping Supervisor	Assigns dock doors, approves load plans, and resolves loading exceptions with carriers.
Forklift Operator	Loads freight into trailers following the load plan and weight distribution rules.
Carrier Driver	Presents pickup paperwork, inspects and signs for the load, and secures the trailer for transit.

RACI matrix

Activity	Shipping Clerk	Shipping Supervisor	Forklift Operator	Carrier Driver
Assign dock door and carrier	C	R/A	-	I
Verify staged freight against orders	R	A	-	-

Activity	Shipping Clerk	Shipping Supervisor	Forklift Operator	Carrier Driver
Load trailer per load plan	C	A	R	I
Generate BOL and manifest	R	A	-	I
Seal and dispatch trailer	R	A	-	R

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

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- WMS or TMS shipping terminal
- BOL and manifest forms
- Trailer seals with a seal log
- Pallet jack or forklift
- Load bars and straps
- Freight scale
- Shipping label and packing slip stock

Personal protective equipment

- Steel-toe or safety shoes
- High-visibility vest
- Gloves for handling straps and seals

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Review the outbound schedule** Check the day's carrier pickup schedule and cutoff times, and confirm which staged orders and pallets are assigned to each trailer or route.	Shipping Supervisor	☐
5.2	**Assign the dock door** Assign an available dock door to the arriving carrier, matching trailer size and load volume, and update the door status in the WMS or TMS.	Shipping Supervisor	☐
5.3	**Verify staged freight against orders** Scan each staged pallet or carton against the outbound order list, confirming carrier, destination and piece count before it is approved for loading. **Checkpoint:** Every scanned unit matches the correct carrier and destination before loading begins.	Shipping Clerk	☐
5.4	**Build the load plan** Sequence freight for loading based on delivery stop order for multi-stop routes, placing heavier pallets low and evenly distributing weight across the trailer axles.	Shipping Supervisor	☐
5.5	**Inspect the trailer before loading** Check the trailer floor, walls and roof for damage, moisture or debris, and confirm it is the correct trailer and temperature setting for the freight before loading starts. **Warning:** Do not load freight into a trailer with a damaged floor or visible leaks; report it to the shipping supervisor and request a different trailer.	Forklift Operator	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.6	**Load the trailer** Load pallets or cartons following the load plan, securing them with load bars or straps as needed, and leave the last-stop freight nearest the door for multi-stop routes.	Forklift Operator	☐
5.7	**Generate the BOL and manifest** Generate the bill of lading and manifest in the WMS or TMS listing every pallet or carton, piece count, weight and freight class for the shipment.	Shipping Clerk	☐
5.8	**Present paperwork to the driver** Give the driver the BOL for review and signature, and confirm the driver's name and carrier match the scheduled pickup before releasing the trailer for closing.	Shipping Clerk	☐
5.9	**Seal the trailer** Close and seal the trailer with a numbered security seal immediately after loading is confirmed complete, and record the seal number on the BOL and seal log. **Checkpoint:** The seal number recorded on the BOL matches the physical seal on the trailer door.	Shipping Clerk	☐
5.10	**Update shipment status** Mark the orders as shipped in the WMS, which should trigger tracking numbers and shipment notifications to the appropriate downstream systems.	Shipping Clerk	☐
5.11	**Release the trailer** Confirm the dock door is clear, remove the wheel chocks and dock lock, and release the driver to depart once paperwork and the seal are confirmed.	Shipping Supervisor	☐
5.12	**File shipping documents** File the signed BOL, manifest and seal log by date and carrier, whether in the TMS or a physical binder, so they can be retrieved for a claim or audit.	Shipping Clerk	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every pallet is scan-verified against the correct carrier and destination before loading.
- Seal numbers on the BOL match the physical trailer seal on 100% of outbound loads.
- Load plans distribute weight evenly and sequence multi-stop routes correctly.
- Signed BOLs are filed and retrievable within one business day.

7. Records

- Signed bills of lading
- Trailer manifests
- Seal log
- Shipment status updates in the WMS or TMS

8. KPIs

- On-time dispatch rate against carrier cutoff
- Loading accuracy (correct carrier and destination)
- Trailer cube or weight utilization
- Number of shipments missing a BOL or seal record

9. Common mistakes

- Loading freight before it is scan-verified against the order.
- Recording a seal number that does not match the trailer.
- Loading a multi-stop route with first-stop freight buried at the back.
- Releasing a trailer without a signed BOL on file.

10. Revision history

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

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

This is a template. Adapt it to your organization, equipment and local regulations before use.

Scan for the latest version

Opens this template online, where you can download it again in Word, PDF, Excel or CSV — free, no sign-up.

Or add it to Perfect Wiki so your team can find it and ask questions about it in Microsoft Teams, Slack, kChat or Mattermost.