



WHAT IS REFRIGERATED LTL?

A Guidebook for Beginners



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WHAT IS REFRIGERATED LTL?

In technical terms, refrigerated (or reefer) less-than-truckload (LTL) is the process of shipping refrigerated or temperature-controlled freight that does not require the space of an entire trailer.

Sometimes, refrigerated shipments are too small to require a full truckload trailer, but it would be too expensive to send them on their own smaller truck. This is the premise of LTL shipping. Multiple customers' shipments are loaded onto the same full-size trailer so that they can be transported efficiently.

Using an LTL carrier is far more cost-effective than using a truckload carrier for shipments which do not completely fill a trailer. A good rule of thumb: shipments that weigh less than 10,000 pounds or consist of one to eight pallets can be considered a great fit for refrigerated LTL services.

For reefer LTL shipments, a refrigerated trailer maintains the freight at a specified temperature range to prevent the product from deteriorating or becoming damaged. For example, frozen fish might move at a temperature range of 0 to -10 degrees Fahrenheit, while chilled beverages could move at a range of 32 to 36 degrees Fahrenheit. Refrigerated LTL ships at a temperature range, not at a specific degree, so that multiple shipments within the same range can be shipped together.





HOW DOES A REFRIGERATED LTL SHIPMENT MOVE FROM ORIGIN TO DESTINATION?

An LTL shipment is handled much differently (and more frequently) than a truckload shipment. Generally, a truckload shipment is picked up and delivered by the same driver, in the same trailer, from Point A to Point B. An LTL shipment will almost always be driven by multiple drivers and loaded from one trailer to another as it makes its way from origin to destination.

LTL carriers combine shipments from multiple customers that are moving the same direction or headed to the same geographic delivery area to optimize the usage of their equipment and drivers. Loading a trailer with as much weight as possible is the key for LTL carriers to operate efficiently and turn a profit. Many different LTL shipments combine to fill one trailer.





HOW DO REFRIGERATED LTL SHIPMENTS DIFFER FROM OTHER MODES?

Reefer LTL blends the mechanics and logistics of dry LTL and refrigerated full truckload. This means that reefer LTL is like a hybrid mode that pulls aspects from both modes of transportation. Like dry LTL, the shipments are smaller than a full truckload shipment, and they ride on trucks with other customers' freight; however, like truckload, a lot of carriers and consignees operate by appointment only.

What truly sets reefer LTL apart from other modes is that it offers refrigerated shipping on a smaller, more cost-effective scale. It allows customers to keep their perishable goods at a constant temperature without the need to use and pay for a full truck.

One notable difference between traditional LTL and reefer LTL is that typically, LTL shipments can never be picked up and delivered on the same day. However, reefer LTL carriers may be able to accommodate this need if it's a small, local run.





REFRIGERATED LTL PICKUP AND DELIVERY SCHEDULES

Refrigerated LTL is a little different than regular dry LTL, and other modes of transportation, because reefer LTL carriers do not operate within the same pickup time parameters.

To put things into perspective, an LTL carrier may be able to pick up just about every day, Monday through Friday. However, a refrigerated LTL carrier has set days that they pick up, depending on the region. For example, if a refrigerated LTL carrier picks up in Los Angeles on Thursdays and Fridays only, then the shipper would not be able to ship anything with them Monday through Wednesday.

The same can be said for refrigerated LTL carriers' delivery schedules, which also run on a weekly parameter. Meaning that, if a carrier only delivers to Boston on Tuesdays, then freight picked up the week before will only be able to be delivered on the following Tuesday.

Most reefer LTL carriers pick up in the later part of the week (between Wednesday and Thursday) and deliver the following week. This allows them to stay consistent and organized by maintaining the pickup appointment schedules and cross docking all the outbound freight over the weekend for delivery the following week. This can pose as a hurdle to customers because if they have an urgent shipment that needs to ship out on a Monday, for instance, and the carrier only picks up in that area on Thursday and Friday, the customer may have to wait a few days before they can ship the product via reefer LTL.

Another thing to keep in mind is that shipping LTL means that other customers' freight will be on the same truck as yours. With reefer LTL, freight that needs to be maintained at a similar range in temperature will be put on the same truck. Shipping multiple customers' freight on the same trailer is only made possible by this consolidation based on temperature range.



HOW CAN I START SHIPPING REFRIGERATED LTL FREIGHT?

If you're ready to start shipping refrigerated LTL shipments, there are a few important things to consider before you take the plunge. First things first: make sure you completely understand how reefer LTL works as a mode. In other words, get very comfortable with temperature ranges in relation to transit times, sailing schedules (when a carrier picks up and delivers), cross docking, and possible additional fees or risks that could come with the territory (lumper fees, detention, damages, etc.). If any of these terms seem foreign to you, check out our **Shipping and Logistics Terminology Guide, free to download here.**

Once you feel comfortable with all of the stipulations and details that go along with reefer LTL as a mode, you should take a look at your supply chain and how your processes and needs fit with this mode. Do you know the temperature ranges your products need to maintain? Do you know the types of transit times your supply chain can afford, either waiting for product to be delivered or waiting to be shipped? These are important details to figure out before you call a third-party logistics solutions provider, like Trinity Logistics, to arrange your reefer LTL shipments.

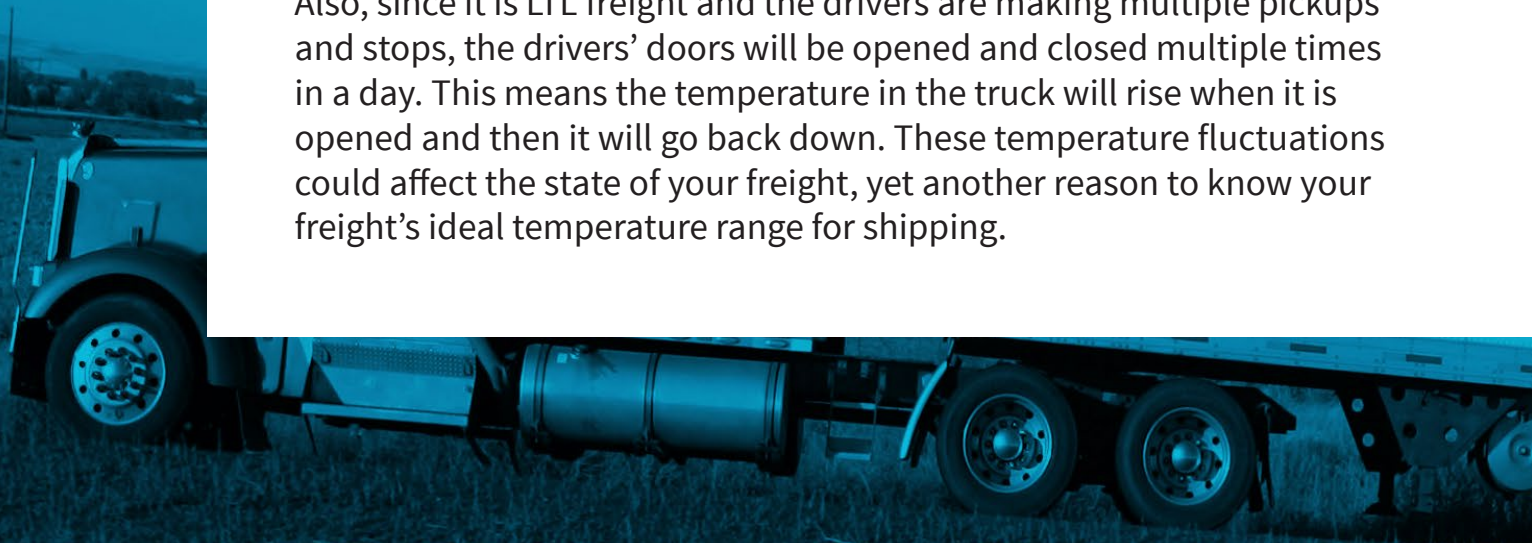




WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO SHIP REFRIGERATED LTL SHIPMENTS EFFICIENTLY?

In order to be successful, and arrange hassle-free reefer LTL shipments, you should take a few issues into consideration:

- The time frame that reefer LTL carriers use. The sailing schedule of carriers is one of the biggest determining factors in when your freight can be shipped. Sometimes freight might be ready on a Tuesday, but the carrier doesn't pick up there until Thursday or Friday. Keep this in mind when you're planning out your shipments. Don't let your stock run too low, or agree to very time-sensitive delivery dates, unless you know your reefer LTL carriers' schedule by heart.
- Temperature ranges for reefer LTL are different than traditional truckload. Where a truckload driver can set his reefer unit to 33 degrees and roll on that, an LTL carrier has to have a range. This is so that they can accommodate more than one product type on the same trailer. Also, since it is LTL freight and the drivers are making multiple pickups and stops, the drivers' doors will be opened and closed multiple times in a day. This means the temperature in the truck will rise when it is opened and then it will go back down. These temperature fluctuations could affect the state of your freight, yet another reason to know your freight's ideal temperature range for shipping.





IS IT MORE EXPENSIVE THAN OTHER MODES?

Unfortunately, due to the equipment needed, as well as the nature of the commodities being hauled, reefer LTL is almost always more expensive than dry LTL. Carriers need to take into consideration the perishability of the shipment, as well as the costs incurred from maintaining the temperature in the trailer when figuring their prices. However, specific costs are all dependent upon the shipping lane (destination and origin), available carriers and equipment, and value of freight. High-ticket items, like lobster, will cost more to insure and ship than frozen pizza, for example.

In general, reefer LTL cargo is higher value than dry freight. With that being said, another aspect to take into consideration would be the cargo liability coverage needed for the freight. Since the freight is higher value, reefer LTL carriers don't usually provide as much coverage. As a general guideline, dry LTL carriers usually provide about \$15 to \$25 per pound, whereas reefer LTL carriers might only provide \$1 to \$3 per pound.





HOW CAN I GET THE BEST RATE?

As with all freight quotes, supplying your shipping provider with all the details for a particular quote ensures that there are no surprise charges once the freight gets picked up and delivered. Also, if you have a large volume of freight that you move regularly, they may be able to find customer specific rates for you, but would need several months of backlogged information to negotiate with.

Working with a third-party logistics company (3PL), like Trinity Logistics, can help you get the best rate possible when shipping via refrigerated LTL. 3PL's can secure the best pricing with reefer LTL carriers, as they have high volumes of freight to move.

As an added benefit, working with Trinity can take a lot of hassle out of arranging reefer LTL shipments. Trinity's LTL representatives can take care of quoting, building, and dispatching your pickups. They can also negotiate rates on your behalf, as well as track your shipments from start to finish. Although this mode is complex and difficult, we are actively expanding our refrigerated LTL service offerings and invite you to learn more by visiting www.trinitylogistics.com.





HOW CAN I GET A REFRIGERATED LTL QUOTE?

To receive an accurate quote, refer to this handy checklist and be sure to send your reefer LTL shipping provider all of the following information:

- **The number of pallets**
- **The total weight of the shipment**
- **The pallet dimensions (L x W x H)**
- **Whether or not the pallets are stackable**
- **The origin zip code and delivery zip code**
- **The type of goods you are shipping and how they are packaged**
- **Ideal temperature range**
- **The value of the freight**
- **Any known accessories (for example, if you will need a liftgate at pickup or delivery, if it is delivering to a residence, etc.)**

If you have a refrigerated LTL shipment you need to get a quote for, we are happy to provide you with one. As a third party logistics provider, we work with multiple LTL carriers. Get a better deal on your LTL shipments by taking advantage of our rates – [fill out our easy online quote form!](#)





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