



Frightening Freight Fiascos and How to Avoid Them

An Interview with Blake Bina from Professional Export Services

A freight forwarder's main job is putting together the puzzle of how to ship freight around the world by working with both the exporting company and the importing company abroad based on their client's needs. In this way, they can be thought of as "professional puzzle solvers" for international trade.

Blake Bina is the Vice President of Sales / Business Development at Professional Export Services, Inc. based in Eagan, Minnesota. Blake grew up in North Dakota and has worked in the industry for 26 years, including with many North Dakota firms. During his career, he has witnessed some incredible incidents in the international shipping world.

One of these incidents was a shipment from a local manufacturer with a buyer in Australia. Several weeks after the shipment had been shipped to Australia, the deal fell through. Due to international trade regulations, all shipments must be shipped to their declared destination. While the shipper was searching for a buyer elsewhere, the freight was racking up storage costs in the Australian port. They then found a buyer in Saudi Arabia, but that deal fell through while the freight was crossing the Indian Ocean. They then had another buyer in Germany, but, once again, it fell through because of the wear and tear from hundreds of days of oceangoing. Finally, the freight made its way back to the US after its 5-month circumnavigation around the world. What is the lesson to learn? Make sure you know your buyer and have your payments secured or guaranteed prior to shipment.

Another unusual incident was when a company shipped a Portable Biohazard Protection Lab to Iraq in the 90s. This was when the American military had a very active presence in the country. As it turned out, the U.S. military did a flyover of the portable lab while it was in the desert and blew it up, as unfortunately the portable lab had a similar digit footprint to a SCUD missile launcher. Fortunately, the



John Deere combines being shipped overseas.



Case IH Combine being lowered on to a ship.

buyer had cargo insurance! The lesson to learn is the value of cargo insurance, especially when shipping to more dangerous places.

Blake also must deal with misconceptions that a company may have about exporting. A common one is just how long it takes to get freight shipped to another company. Shipping large freight across the globe is not like Amazon Prime shipping! Companies sometimes forget that even though all the paperwork is done correctly, there can still be delays. This often happens when U.S. Customs randomly selects a container to inspect to ensure compliance with U.S. regulations. Unfortunately, this risk is completely out of a freight forwarder's control. The lesson here for exporters is to not overpromise on delivery expectations with buyers.

Though most of the freight shipped overseas gets to its buyer with no issues, accidents happen. By guaranteeing payments prior to shipment, purchasing cargo insurance, and not overpromising on deliveries, American companies can enjoy the fruits of the global economy.

For more information on the U.S. Commercial Service / North Dakota, [click here](#). For more information on Professional Export Services or to connect with Blake, [click here](#).

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