

Guide to Shipping

Shipping often seems to be one of the most complicated parts of the exhibition tour. This guide has been developed to answer some of these questions and to help you to plan an effective shipping schedule. The ideas listed below are guidelines and not hard and fast rules. Each state is different and each venue is different, so everyone must be flexible. Even so, these guidelines should aid you as you wander through the wild world of shipping.

The Process

SITES will contact the first venue about a month before the tour begins in your state. At this time we will discuss dates and times that work best and will allow enough time for the exhibition to arrive before the installation workshop. Traditionally, the exhibit materials arrive sometime during the week preceding the scheduled installation workshop. SITES is responsible for all arrangements and cost for the first and last shipment. After the initial shipment, the individual state humanities councils will arrange all following shipments. It is up to the coordinator to work with the venues to develop the best method of shipment for the state and then to communicate to the venue representatives when the shipments will take place and by whom the shipment is to be conducted. In most cases the humanities councils will pay directly for the shipment, but not always. Venues have sometimes paid for shipment from the stipend they received from the humanities councils. It depends upon what has been worked out within your state. At the end of the tour, the last venue has an additional responsibility. They will need to work with SITES' designated shipper to arrange a date that is best to load the exhibition. SITES will arrange and pay for the final shipment back to Washington, DC.

Important Points to Remember

- SITES is responsible for making the arrangements and paying the cost to ship the exhibition to the first venue and from the last venue.
- The state humanities council, working with their state participants, is responsible for making the arrangements and paying the cost to ship the exhibit to all the venues in their state.

What to Consider When Making the Arrangements

In order to make the tour experience enjoyable to all, the state humanities council coordinator should plan shipping arrangements for the state about a month before the tour opens. Although more specific details about shipment will be worked out as the tour progresses, at least you, the coordinator, and the representatives at the venue will be aware of the basic arrangements. Most often stress and confusion arise over these shipping arrangements, but if it is done in advance, everyone can relax and enjoy.

When making shipping arrangements within the state, it is important to consider these things:

- Size and type of conveyance: Will all the crates fit in one enclosed vehicle without forcing? Square foot requirements are 100 square feet—a bed area of

10 feet x 10 feet should work. Does the vehicle have a lift gate for ease of loading and unloading?

- Quality of service: If using a company, are they well known in your area? Do they have a good reputation? Are they reliable?
- Secured conveyance: Is the vehicle able to be securely locked? Will the vehicle be attended at all times during transport?
- Covered conveyance: This is a requirement. No open bed pickup trucks please.
- The loading area should be in close proximity to the exhibit hall so that the crates are not subject to extreme weather. The crates should not be exposed to moisture; water will soak through the crates and damage the exhibition.
- Territory: Can you contract with this company for all venues in your state for a discounted price?
- Cost: Some companies may offer discounts for non-profits as a donation or as a matter of policy for multiple shipments, so it is worth checking.
- Convenience: Some places have used personal vans or have rented trucks. In some cases, this may be the only solution due to expense and lack of shipping resources in a particular area. One note of caution though: liability and security should be considered when doing this and all participants will need to be aware of their roles and obligations. Also, rented vehicles may not be completely weather tight—too many people have had their furniture damaged due to an undetected leak.

Packing and Security Issues During Shipment

Although not required, we recommend that a shipping company be used to transport the exhibit around the state. The rationale for this is that they usually have trained staff with knowledge of appropriate handling and security procedures and also provide secured, insured vehicles. This is not always the case, but it is more the rule than the exception. If you do not know of a good company in your area, call an in-state museum or even a local art gallery. They might be able to give you some suggestions. Some states in the past have used staff vans or covered trucks, but the drivers and assistants should be informed of the security and packing procedures as well as personal responsibilities. These include:

- The crates should be carefully packed and not forced in. The crates are sturdy, but not indestructible.
- The conveyance should be the size to allow the crates to travel upright on its wheels. The crates were designed to travel upright.
- Ropes or parachute cord should be used to prevent the crates from rolling or sliding around if there is a sudden stop.
- One person should stay with the vehicle at all times during the transport. Most moving companies require this since they are liable for the shipment.
- The conveyance must be locked during transport.
- If the drivers of the conveyance are not contract truck drivers, please remind them that for good security it is best to go directly from the pick up location to final destination by the most direct route possible. No personal stops. Stops can be made for food and refueling only. Again, just a good security precaution.
- Unloading should be done slowly and carefully, even with a lift gate. Although crates are sturdy, they can get damaged. The exhibit materials inside can also be damaged through mishandling.

- Venue coordinators for shipments should be made aware of these points even if the conveyance is commercial. They do have the right to caution the shippers about their handling and packing actions if necessary. Safety first!

Communication is the Key

To ensure that everything runs smoothly, it is important to inform the venue representatives about the time and date of pick up or delivery and the name of the company, its phone number and contact person's name. It is also helpful to provide each venue with a list of all participants in this project so that they can contact each other if there is a delay, if they have questions, or if they just want to talk.

Below are things to remind the venues when preparing for shipment:

- If they do not get a call from the shipper at least 24 hours before the scheduled pick up or delivery, they should call the shipper or previous venue to find out what is going on. Chances are the company just forgot to call, but it may be something else. It is worth checking.
- Prepare a place inside to receive and store the crates before installation that is clean and kept at room temperature. It is better to err on the side of colder rather than hotter. The crating materials can warp or crack if kept in an overly warm area. The goal is to ensure that the crates and exhibit panels are not exposed to extremes in weather or environmental conditions.
- Let the last venue of your state's tour know that they will need to be in touch with SITES' shipper about final pick up date for the exhibition.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Terri Cobb at (202) 275-1260.