Receiving Damage & Freight Claim Checklist

The dock-to-recovery playbook: inspect at handoff, preserve evidence, notify every liable party the same day, and build a claim pack an adjuster can approve without asking a question.

1. Dock-side receiving checklist — before you sign anything

- [ ] Count every carton against the packing list.
- [ ] Photograph all four sides of each pallet and carton before unloading.
- [ ] Look for soft carton walls, fork punctures, watermarks, or extreme pallet lean.
- [ ] Read every shock and tilt indicator — record triggered sensors.
- [ ] Check for cut tape, resealed customs tape, or disturbed inner packs.
- [ ] Shake each carton: loose rattle = probable internal breakage. Record it.
- [ ] Smell for moisture or mold before the trailer door closes.

Decision

- [ ] Refuse the freight — severe damage or a triggered indicator with a clean POD request.
- [ ] Accept with exceptions — write the specific panel, corner, and pallet position.
- [ ] Accept pending concealed-damage inspection — note it on the POD.

> **Exception wording that survives a challenge:**
> "Carton 4 — punctured top-left panel, approx. 2 in. crush; pallet 2 front-right corner crushed; shrink wrap torn on two faces. Driver did not wait for full inspection."
> Never write only "damaged." Force the driver to countersign next to the note.

> **Never sign a clean POD if you suspect hidden damage.** A clean signature makes the origin record look perfect and is the fastest route to an automatic denial.

2. Evidence capture ladder

1. Photograph the outer shipment from all sides.
2. Capture labels, tracking stickers, pallet tags, and seal condition.
3. Open cartons carefully; record hidden damage before moving contents.
4. Photograph product damage, internal dunnage, void fill, and carton construction.
5. Keep all packaging, inserts, and pallets intact until a written release arrives.

Record a continuous video of the unpack sequence when damage is concealed. Upload to a shared, date-stamped claim folder or WMS ticket.

3. Same-day notification matrix

Party	Channel	Attachments	Deadline
Carrier	Claims portal + email	POD & photos	< 24 hours
Forwarder / 3PL	Email	Damage summary	< 24 hours
Cargo insurer	Portal	Policy & invoice	< 3 days
Supplier	Email	QC photos	< 3 days
Finance / FBA ops	Slack	SKU impact list	Immediate

Subject line: `DAMAGE NOTICE - [Shipment reference]`. State that you are retaining all packaging and request a formal survey.

4. Liability routing

Symptom	Likely liable party
Internal top-load crush lines; goods damaged before dispatch	Supplier / packaging design
Water staining, fork punctures, band breakage in transit	Carrier
Cut or resealed customs tape	Customs / inspection handler
Broad or excluded-risk loss	Cargo insurer

Claim value = unit value + freight paid + duties + inspection + rework + disposal − salvage. Never inflate with unsupported lost-profit figures.

5. Claim package — nine components

1. **Cover note** — specific damage facts ("left-front carton corner crushed 2 inches inward").
2. **Claim form** — all portal fields drafted offline first.
3. **BOL / POD** — countersigned exception notes highlighted.
4. **Financial proof** — commercial invoice, PO, packing list.
5. **Tracking record** — full transit timeline export.
6. **Visual evidence** — pallet, dunnage, labels, SKU damage, with captions.
7. **Factory evidence** — pre-shipment QC reports and packaging specs.
8. **Estimates** — repair, disposal, or salvage quotes.
9. **Communication log** — every email with forwarder, carrier, and supplier as one PDF.

Folder naming: `YYYYMMDD_Carrier_TrackingNumber`. Compress to a single ZIP before touching a carrier portal — portals time out during photo uploads.

6. Submission and tracking routine

- [ ] Official confirmation number saved.
- [ ] One named internal claim owner assigned.
- [ ] Weekly follow-up dates calendared.
- [ ] Every carrier request for extra evidence logged.
- [ ] Packaging retained until written release.
- [ ] Notice deadline and full-document deadline calendared separately.

7. Denial rebuttal checklist

- [ ] Read the denial letter and classify the reason: late notice, insufficient packaging, or excluded peril.
- [ ] Rebutt point by point; map evidence directly to the stated reason.
- [ ] Cite contract terms, tariff rules, and the exact chronology.
- [ ] Attach packaging test records and pre-shipment QC data.
- [ ] Request formal reconsideration and a supervisor review.
- [ ] If refused: decide between insurer recovery, supplier offset, or arbitration.

> **Benchmark from our network:** standard single-wall cartons showed an 8.4% damage rate across 10,000 international shipments; double-wall cartons with custom molded inserts dropped that to 0.2%. Packaging evidence is what turns a denial into a payout.

Prepared by LeelinePromotion's quality, compliance, and logistics team. This is a working template, not legal advice. Always verify current requirements with the relevant authority (CPSC, EU Commission, GB standards, or your customs broker) before production. Questions: https://www.leelinepromotion.com/contact-us/