

Shipping can be one of the most complicated parts of an exhibition tour. This guide provides details on selecting a shipping process and planning an effective shipping schedule. The ideas listed below are guidelines. Each state is different and each venue is different, so everyone must be flexible. Even so, these guidelines should help 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 allow enough time for the exhibition to arrive before the installation workshop. Traditionally, the exhibition arrives sometime during the week preceding the scheduled installation workshop. SITES is responsible for all arrangements and costs for the first and last shipment. After the initial shipment, participating 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 the shipping method selected by the council. 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 costs 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 costs to ship the exhibit to all venues in the state.

What to Consider When Making Arrangements

In order to make the tour experience enjoyable for all, the state humanities council coordinator should plan shipping arrangements for the state at least a month before the tour begins. Although more specific details about shipment will be worked out as the tour progresses, it will be helpful for the council and venues to be aware of the basic arrangements before the tour begins.

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? 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.
- Facilities: The loading area should be in close proximity to the exhibit space 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 councils and venues 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. All participants will need to be aware of their roles and obligations.
- Alternate options: Some states have had success by working with a trucking school or the National Guard to transport exhibitions. Consider contracting with a larger museum that has a truck and might be willing to lend a hand or expertise to the local communities as well.

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 a local museum or art gallery. They may be able to give you some suggestions. Some states in the past have used staff vans or covered trucks, but drivers and assistants should be informed of security and packing procedures as well as personal responsibilities. These include:

- The crates should be carefully packed and not forced into the vehicle. The crates are sturdy, but not indestructible.
- The conveyance should have enough space to allow each crate to travel upright on its wheels. The crates are designed to travel upright.
- **Ropes or parachute cord should be used to prevent 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, this is 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 poor handling.
- 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 pickup and delivery, along with the name of the shipping company, its phone number and a 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.

Reminders for venues when preparing for a shipment:

- If you do not get a call from the shipper at least 24 hours before the scheduled pickup or delivery, you should call the shipper or the previous venue to find out the status. Chances are the company just forgot to call, but it may be something else. It is worth checking.
- Prepare a place inside for receiving and storing the crates before installation. The space should be clean and kept around 68 to 72 degrees, or a moderate 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 the final pick up date for the exhibition.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Terri Cobb at 202.633.5334.