Bulletin 915 - 10/13 - Container Cargo Temperatures - Worldwide

The Association has seen an increase in claims for damage to refrigerated cargo due to the improper setting of the temperature or confusion over °C and °F setting.

A few years ago, the Association issued a Loss Prevention Bulletin covering this topic and based on a recent spike in claims, it may be prudent for claims handlers to review the below guidelines with their operations colleagues and identify any areas in need of improvement. If these phases are handled properly, claims will be reduced which results in happy customers and increased profits for the carrier.

The Booking

**Equipment availability**
The type/size equipment should be listed in the booking. The booking representative must check with the operations department to ensure the equipment type requested is available at the port of loading requested.

**Commodity**
The actual commodity should be listed in the booking.

**Temperature setting**
Fahrenheit or Celsius? Confusion and misapplication of Fahrenheit or Celsius thermostat settings is a leading cause of refrigerated cargo claims.

**Vent setting (fresh air exchange)**
Book fresh air vent settings in cubic feet per minute (cfm) or cubic metres per hour (cmh). Do not use percentage or partial openings like ¼ or 25% open. Incorrect vent settings such as 25% or 50% could result in excessive amounts or fresh air exchange which may cause temperature and humidity management problems.

The empty release

**Pre Trip Inspection**
Prior to the empty release, the refrigeration unit, the refrigerated container and genset must go through a pre trip inspection (PTI). Such inspections are crucial to ensure the unit will perform as desired.

**Temperature/Vent setting**
Upon completion of the pre-trip, but prior to release of the empty unit to the trucker, the thermostat and fresh air exchange (vents) must be set in accordance with the booking instructions. Special care must be taken to ensure that Celsius & Fahrenheit are not confused.
Under no circumstances is the terminal to assume that the trucker or the shipper or the receiving terminal will set the thermostat or fresh air exchange correctly after the cargo is loaded.

The genset must be pre-tripped and filled with adequate fuel to make the entire journey to the designated destination. The genset should be checked to ensure the unit is running properly just prior to empty release to the trucker.

**The Refrigerated cargo loading in the container**

It is very important that the cargo is cooled to its desired carrying temperature prior to loading. The reefer unit is not intended to cool cargo and this could result in elevated temperatures and delays during the in gate receiving process.

Elevated temperature readings due to a lack of pre-cooled cargo could also cause the terminal to waste time and money running tests to ensure the unit is running properly. Cargo loaded at elevated temperatures is one of the leading causes of cargo claims.

**The Refrigerated container at the Port of Loading**

When the reefer container arrives at the port of loading, the temperature setting, return air temperature and vent setting should be checked against the booking information supplied by the shipping line and the trucker’s paperwork.

The container yard personnel should inform the shipping line if the temperature displayed on an operating refrigerated container is not decreasing to the shipper specified thermostat setting in a reasonable period of time.

If the refrigerated containers thermostat setting, return air temperature and vent setting is correct, the container can be in gated. The seal number, temperature, vent setting and cargo weight should be noted on the EIR. The refrigerated container should be stowed in the reefer section of the container yard and plugged into shore power.

The container yard personnel should monitor the refrigerated containers at least twice daily and record the thermostats setting, supply air and return air temperatures and vent setting in the refrigerated container yard monitoring log until the container is loaded onboard the vessel.

Shipping Lines and Terminal Operators should store refrigerated temperature records which help defend cargo claims in an accessible location for at least 12 months before they can be moved to off facility storage.

**The Bill of Lading**

Shipping Lines documentation departments must compare the bill of lading instructions received from the shipper with the booking instructions and report any discrepancies to their supervisor. Under no circumstances should a bill of lading be issued for a temperature or vent setting that is different from the booking.

**Source of information:**

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