

An SOP is more than just another tedious document required to move your freight; it ensures that operations between the importer, forwarder, and other parties involved in your shipments run as smoothly as possible.

Most logistics coordinators already have some form of standard operating procedures for their daily operations. Often, the procedures aren't written down; it's just the

way you have always handled things. That approach can work for internal logistics. However, when working with a freight forwarder, it's crucial to create a written SOP, update it on a regular basis, and refer to it when questions arise.

For more on what an SOP requires:
blog.anderinger.com/blog/planning-an-sop-for-freight-forwarding

A FREIGHT FORWARDING SOP CHECKLIST

- Email addresses for pre-alerts and shipment status.**
- Chain of contact.**
- Invoicing information.**
- Information about your product or commodity.**
- Special details: are shipments usually oversized, and do the goods contain hazardous material.**
- Delivery schedules.**
- Brokerage information.**
- Escalation approval and procedure.**
- Communication expectations, such as reporting requirements and relationship reviews.**

A chain of contacts for specific situations can save a lot of time and eliminate confusion. It's something people tend to overlook, but consider this: if Bob in billing is sick, who should be contacted? If a shipment is overweight by 50 pounds, do you want to be notified? What if it's overweight by 1,000 pounds? Making basic information like this available in the SOP saves everyone time.

Including information about your commodity allows anyone involved in the process to have a better overall scope of the shipment and anything extra that might be needed.

Do any Partner Government Agencies, such as the FDA, EPA, or FCC affect your shipping? Details about your shipments help the forwarder put the correct plan in place for your goods. For example, if someone is out on vacation and a new person is reading the SOP, they'll know if they need a special carrier for oversized goods or any additional steps needed for hazardous materials transport without having to call you to ask. If there's no SOP, something as basic as a change in personnel could cause delays or increase shipping costs.

Creating a written SOP with your freight forwarding company builds contingency plans into your profit margin. Keep it simple and draft separate SOPs for your different products and lanes if they require separate processes or the handling expectations differ for each. The SOP(s) will help you keep escalation in check, avoid delays, and improve communication. You'll also get a clearer idea of what to expect from your forwarding company on each leg of your shipment's journey.