

Freight Invoice Audit Checklist

The most common billing mistakes aren't obvious — until you know what to look for.



Use this checklist to identify hidden charges, detect billing errors, and manage your freight spend effectively.

Invoice Accuracy

- Confirm that weights, dimensions, and freight classes are billed correctly
- Match source documents to the freight invoice
- Determine charge responsibility: *Are these costs your responsibility, or should the shipper, consignee, or third-party be paying?*
- Catch duplicate charges by matching carrier invoice numbers and your internal shipment IDs
- Validate accessorial (e.g., liftgate, detention, reconsignment) to ensure services were rendered
- Match invoice totals to the expected shipment costs per your carrier contract or pricing agreement

Contract Compliance

- Cross-check rates against your negotiated carrier agreements
- Review minimums, surcharges, and discounts for compliance
- Confirm that incentives and volume-based pricing are applied correctly
- Flag discrepancies and review them with carrier reps during QBRs

Classification & Service Validation

- Confirm NMFC freight classifications are accurate
- New product? New lane? Double-check that your classification updates are reflected correctly
- Review billed service levels (e.g., expedited vs. standard)
- Flag missed guaranteed deliveries
- File for refunds per your carrier contracts' claim timeframes



Filing deadlines vary by carrier and mode — make sure your team knows the window.

Fuel & Accessorial Fees



- Compare fuel surcharges to published or contracted fuel indices



Many fuel surcharges change weekly. Is your team monitoring updates regularly?

- Audit accessorial for frequency, reason codes, and accuracy
- Identify repeat offenders like detention, reweigh, or redelivery charges



Spot recurring patterns and implement process changes to prevent them.

Mode & Routing Efficiency



- Confirm correct mode (LTL, TL) was used for each shipment.
- Flag avoidable premium or expedited services
- Recommend cost-saving alternatives for future routing



Proactively prevent excess costs — don't just react to them.

Dispute Resolution



- Track billing discrepancies and submit claims within required timeframes
- Maintain a log of disputed charges, resolution status, and recovery amounts
- Monitor problematic carriers and evaluate whether they should remain in your routing guide

Reporting & Spend Visibility



- Review savings summaries and exception reports regularly
- Share audit reports with finance — savings data supports cash flow goals
- Benchmark carrier performance across lanes, regions, service types, and invoicing accuracy
- Use audit insights to strengthen negotiation strategy or justify vendor changes

It's not just the Base Rate. It's the line-haul charge, discounts, accessorial, and ever-increasing surcharge fees that are impacting your company's bottom line.

Top Cost Drivers to Watch in 2025-2026

- Dimensional Weight Charges
- Lift Gate Services
- Residential Delivery/Pick-up
- Limited Area Pickup
- Congested/Limited Access Delivery
- Re-Weigh and Weight Verification
- Appointment Required
- Single Shipment Fee
- Density Minimum Charge
- Declared Value Coverage
- Signature Required Fees
- Date Certain Delivery

Lightweight Freight & Oversized Shipments

Shipping costs are quietly crushing margins, especially for large, lightweight, and oversized freight.

- Flag shipments hit with dimensional weight pricing
- Evaluate packaging and mode to avoid oversized thresholds
- Identify a more appropriate mode to be used for these shipments in the future
- Analyze package sizes to identify rate increase triggers, such as density-based classifications
- Review charges for Date Certain Delivery, Declared Value, and Signature Requirements
- Track cumulative surcharges over time — even small fees kill margins
- Benchmark base rates against your pricing agreements. These fees often make up the majority of your total freight spend

Cold chain shipping has zero room for error, especially when it pertains to overall cost.

Cold Storage & Temperature-Controlled Freight

- Ensure refrigeration/accessorials are clearly spelled out in your contract
- Confirm service levels match perishability or shelf life requirements
- Audit for temperature-related surcharges and compliance
- Track spoilage claims, delivery delays, and temperature deviations
- Verify that cold chain carriers meet SLAs for transit, trailer type, and handling time
- Benchmark rates against food, pharma, and grocery peers

Tips for Smarter Audits



Know your claim windows: Each carrier and mode has different deadlines. Don't leave money on the table.



Use this checklist as a working tool — and a review agenda with your carrier reps during quarterly business reviews.



The details matter: Freight audits aren't just about refunds — they're about fixing broken processes and protecting your margins long-term.

Feeling overwhelmed by this checklist?

You're not alone! Freight Audits are complex and require specialized analysis by audit professionals trained to not only uncover overcharges, but to provide insight on how to reduce shipping costs in the future without sacrificing service. When you're juggling multiple carriers, modes, and ever-growing surcharges, you need a strong and engaged audit partner.

At ICC, we don't just recover savings, we deliver clarity. With **50 years** of experience and over **\$9B in freight spend analyzed**, we know where the waste hides and how to stop it.

Let's uncover what you might be missing.



Request Your Risk-Free Assessment

or Call us at (516-822-1183) to get started.