

Stackable vs. Non-Stackable Freight

What Is Stackable Freight?

A shipment is considered stackable when it can safely support the weight of another shipment during normal transportation without causing damage to either shipment. Typical characteristics include a flat and stable top surface, sufficient structural strength, secure packaging or palletization, and no markings prohibiting stacking.

What Is Non-Stackable Freight?

A shipment is considered non-stackable when it cannot safely support another shipment or requires protected trailer space above the freight. Examples include freight marked Do Not Stack, shipments with rounded, sloped, or uneven top surfaces, fragile or unstable loads, and equipment with exposed or protruding components.

Key Evaluation Criteria

1. Height: Shipments exceeding 50 inches in height generally require a flat, load-bearing top surface to be considered stackable.
2. Top Surface: Flat and level surfaces are typically stackable, while rounded, angled, or irregular surfaces may be deemed non-stackable.
3. Structural Strength: Freight must be capable of safely supporting additional weight during transportation.
4. Shipper Instructions: Do Not Stack or Top Load Only markings and requests for protected deck space will generally result in a non-stackable determination.

How Customers Can Help Avoid Disputes

- Use the proper NMFC and sub on the bill of lading, The NMFC incorporates stowability considerations when determining the appropriate freight class for each commodity.
- Use sturdy, stack-capable packaging, of sufficient compression strength.
- Clearly label freight requiring special handling.
- Avoid overhangs, exposed components, or unstable pallet configurations.
- Provide accurate dimensions and descriptions on the Bill of Lading.

Important Note

Stackability determinations are based on physical characteristics, packaging, dimensions, load stability, and the ability of freight to safely support another shipment during normal transportation. Non-stackable freight may be subject to additional handling and rating considerations.