



# Certified in Logistics, Transportation and Distribution

Carrier Types





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# Carrier Types

## 1. Common Carriers

Common carriers offer transportation services to the general public under published rates and service terms. They are regulated to provide non-discriminatory access and standardized service quality. Logistics managers must understand tariff structures, service categories, liability rules, and documentation requirements. Common carriers are widely used in LTL trucking, parcel delivery, rail freight, and ocean transport. Their standardized pricing and broad reach offer convenience but may be less flexible than contract carriers.

## 2. Contract Carriers

Contract carriers provide transportation services based on negotiated agreements with specific shippers. These contracts define service levels, rates, volume commitments, and performance metrics. Contracting enables predictability, cost stability, and tailored service capabilities such as dedicated equipment or customized routes. Shippers use contract carriers for consistent capacity and specialized handling needs. However, entry into a contract reduces flexibility to shift carriers quickly.

## 3. Private Carriers

Private carriers are operated by companies to move their own goods, giving them full control over the fleet, drivers, schedules, and service standards. Private fleets support high-service distribution models, time-sensitive deliveries, and proprietary transportation requirements. They enable brand representation and customer intimacy. However,

owning and managing a fleet requires capital investment, regulatory compliance, maintenance operations, and personnel management. CLTD candidates must know when private fleets are cost-justified.

#### **4. Exempt Carriers**

Exempt carriers are exempt from certain economic regulations, typically because they transport specific exempt commodities (e.g., agricultural products). They have fewer rate-filing requirements and more pricing freedom. Understanding exempt carriers helps logistics professionals optimize transport in specialized markets, especially for food, livestock, and bulk commodities. While exempt from some rules, they still must follow safety and insurance regulations.

#### **5. Truckload (TL) Carriers**

Truckload carriers move full loads for a single customer, typically between two points. TL carriers offer lower per-unit cost and reduced handling risk because the shipment stays on one truck. Key considerations include equipment types (dry van, reefer, flatbed), routing, transit time, and driver availability. TL is ideal for high-volume freight, long hauls, and direct shipments. Capacity tightness and spot-market rate volatility are influencing factors.

#### **6. Less-Than-Truckload (LTL) Carriers**

LTL carriers consolidate smaller shipments from multiple shippers using a hub-and-spoke terminal network. Understanding how freight classification, density, accessorial charges, and cubic capacity influence cost is essential. LTL carriers provide broad coverage and frequent

service but involve more handling points, which may increase damage risk. CLTD candidates must understand LTL operational flows, pricing, and network design.

## **7. Parcel / Small Package Carriers**

Parcel carriers specialize in lightweight shipments, offering high-frequency pickup, tracking, home delivery, and integrated logistics services. They operate dense network infrastructures to ensure fast, reliable transit. Pricing is typically based on dimensional weight, service speed, and accessorial charges. E-commerce growth has made parcel carrier strategies essential knowledge for logistics professionals.

## **8. Rail Freight Carriers**

Rail carriers provide efficient, low-cost freight transport over long distances, especially for heavy, bulk, or containerized commodities. They operate fixed rail networks and large rail yards to move freight via block trains and intermodal systems. Key concepts include car types, rail service levels, transit variability, and interline agreements. Rail is energy-efficient but less flexible than trucking.

## **9. Intermodal Carriers**

Intermodal carriers provide coordinated transportation across multiple modes—typically rail, truck, and ocean—using standardized containers. Intermodal reduces handling costs, improves security, and increases efficiency. It is ideal for long-distance domestic freight and international shipments. Logistics professionals must understand ramp

operations, container management, drayage, and equipment constraints. Intermodal enhances sustainability but may add transit time.

## **10. Air Cargo Carriers**

Air carriers offer the fastest transport for high-value, perishable, or urgent shipments. They include passenger airlines (belly cargo) and dedicated cargo airlines. Air shipments involve premium pricing, strict packaging, weight limits, airport handling constraints, and security requirements. Understanding classes of service, freight forwarder roles, and dimensional weight is essential. Air transport provides reliability but limited capacity compared to other modes.

## **11. Ocean Shipping Carriers**

Ocean carriers move international freight in bulk or containers across major trade lanes. Key categories include liner carriers (scheduled services) and tramp carriers (unscheduled, charter-based). Ocean transport is cost-effective but slower and subject to port congestion, weather, and geopolitical risks. Understanding vessel types, container equipment, INCOTERMS, and port operations is crucial.

## **12. Inland Waterway Carriers**

Barge and inland waterway carriers provide cost-efficient transport for bulk commodities such as coal, grain, and chemicals along rivers and canals. They excel in high-volume, low-speed freight. Understanding lock systems, tow operations, draft constraints, and seasonal availability helps optimize logistics networks. While slow, waterway transport is fuel-efficient and environmentally friendly.

### **13. Pipeline Carriers**

Pipelines transport liquids, gases, and slurries continuously and reliably. They are highly efficient, safe, and cost-effective for long-term, fixed-route movement. Key concepts include throughput, operating pressure, monitoring systems, and infrastructure investment. Pipelines require significant capital but minimal labor. Their inflexibility is balanced by high volume capacity.

### **14. Specialized Carriers**

Specialized carriers handle unique or oversized freight requiring custom equipment—e.g., heavy-haul, hazardous materials, temperature-controlled, and fragile goods carriers. They must follow strict regulatory and safety standards. Logistics professionals must understand routing restrictions, permits, and equipment options like lowboy trailers or multi-axle systems.

### **15. Dedicated Fleet Carriers**

Dedicated carriers commit equipment and drivers exclusively to a customer, offering private-fleet-like service without ownership responsibilities. They provide predictable capacity, consistent service levels, and operational control. Understanding contract structures, KPI management, and fleet optimization is key. Dedicated fleets benefit high-volume or time-critical operations.

### **16. Regional and National Carriers**

Carrier networks vary in geographic scope. Regional carriers offer faster service and specialized knowledge within limited areas, while national carriers provide broad coverage and standardized service offerings. Choosing the

right mix impacts transit times, cost, and network reliability. CLTD candidates should know how to evaluate carrier footprints.

### **17. International Carriers**

International carriers manage cross-border and global freight movement, handling customs requirements, documentation, compliance regulations, and multimodal coordination. They include air, ocean, and cross-border trucking carriers. Understanding trade lanes, capacity cycles, and global service structures is critical for effective global logistics planning.

### **18. Freight Forwarders as Carrier Intermediaries**

Freight forwarders consolidate shipments, negotiate rates, and arrange multimodal transport through carriers. They often act as NVOCCs (non-vessel-operating common carriers). Forwarders provide expertise in documentation, customs brokerage, cargo insurance, and international compliance. They do not own major transport assets but manage the transport process.

### **19. 3PL and 4PL Carrier Management**

Third-party logistics providers manage transportation operations, negotiate with multiple carrier types, and integrate value-added services. 4PLs offer strategic oversight across logistics networks. Understanding how these providers select, contract, and optimize carrier performance is key for mastering transport management concepts.



## **20. Carrier Selection and Mode-Matching Strategy**

Matching freight characteristics to the right carrier type determines service quality, cost efficiency, and network performance. Key criteria include volume, density, value, urgency, distance, regulatory constraints, and handling requirements. Understanding carrier strengths and limitations enables optimal routing, pricing negotiation, and multimodal strategy development.

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39. Measuring Supplier Innovation
40. Procurement in Times of Supply Disruption
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43. Contract Negotiation Best Practices
44. Green Procurement and Circular Economy
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47. Procurement Leadership and Strategic Influence
48. Cost Avoidance and Value Creation in Procurement
49. Managing Procurement with Power BI Dashboards
50. Future Skills and Trends in Procurement



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