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Dear FIDI Affiliate,

I am writing to you with an important international shipping update for you and your customers.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global shipping industry is experiencing severe issues, including irregular, delayed or cancelled services, last-minute schedule changes, and steep increases in prices.

As the international moving industry is a key user of these services, it is being seriously affected.

FIDI-Affiliated movers around the world are working hard to mitigate these pressures, but there has been an unavoidable and ongoing impact on the delivery of many services to their customers.

Unexpected demand

The main cause is the unexpected uplift in international demand for goods and services, following the easing of pandemic restrictions, arising from pent up demand and continued strong economic recovery in many markets across the world. Therefore, demand for container shipping is high, while capacity has lowered (see below); a recent BAR update estimated that for every container place currently available, there are two containers waiting.

Container reductions

A reduction in the availability of vessels, either through port or ship lockdowns and COVID-related staff shortages, have added to this problem. There is also a global imbalance in the availability of empty containers for new shipments, which was triggered by lockdowns occurring and being lifted at different times in different regions. Surplus empty containers are stuck in certain ports while shipping slots remain scarce.

With availability low and many ports operating at (sometimes reduced) capacity, long-term storage for containers in and around ports has become severely limited, too.

Driver shortages

Driver shortages have been compounded by the pandemic – these are affecting deliveries to retailers and causing shortages of goods in many markets. They have impacted significantly on the availability of slots for delivering and collecting containers from/to customers' premises and from/to ports.

The impact on moving companies

1. Longer booking times

With availability at an all-time low, it is reportedly taking up to two months, or longer, to book a slot on board a vessel. Before the pandemic, overseas moves could take place at short notice; however, a significant amount of forward planning is now essential.

2. Price increase

As shortages of storage, containers and vessel spaces are tight, the potential knock-on impact of missed slots is extremely high. Shipping lines are adding congestion or service surcharges to cover such issues, often with very little notice.

3. All-round unpredictability

Shipping and its related logistics sectors are now precariously balanced, with only a small amount of disruption needed to cause significant delays to shipments or increases to prices. Ongoing COVID outbreaks are adding to the instability and are a widespread possible cause of sudden staff shortages and immediate delays to movers' shipments.

Moving businesses around the world rely on the smooth running of international shipping to enable them to deliver similarly trouble-free services. The issues described above have made this extremely problematic, introducing volatility and price rises that will inevitably affect customers.

The moving industry will do as much as it possibly can to alleviate the overall impact and, in those areas over which we do have control, to continue to make the moving experience as efficient and stress-free as possible.

Please share this update widely to keep the supply chain and your customers informed.

We are continuing to monitor the difficult international situation and will continue to keep our members updated as it develops.



Jesse van Sas
Secretary-General
FIDI Global Alliance