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SHIPPER LOAD AND COUNT (SLC)

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(What does this mean in truck accident litigation?)
Registered Transportation Practitioner

Truck accidents are all too common and when they happen, there is rarely anything subtle about a truck wreck. There are a multitude of causes of truck accidents involving the truck and/or trailer, the driver, the motor carrier, road conditions, weather, visibility, other motor vehicles, along with many others, however, the load can also frequently be the cause. This article deals with that issue.

The Regulations place a heavy emphasis on the responsibility of the driver and his/her employer for the safe loading and securement of cargo on or in the cargo vehicle so it does not shift or fall en route and is safe for transport as well as unloading. There is an exception relieving the driver/motor carrier from most responsibility for accidents of this nature. Many shipments are loaded and secured by the shipper, the trailer doors sealed, and the shipper moves the trailer from the loading dock to a staging yard to await pick up by the trucker. Shipments of this type are known as Shipper Load and Count or SLC. Commonly, "SLC" is noted on the face of the bill of lading. Whether it is there or not does not change the nature of the load. The usual purpose of this notation is to relieve the motor carrier of most liability for loss or damage since the driver did not witness or participate in the loading, observe the condition of the goods that were loaded, or count the goods loaded. Should the load shift, causing the driver to lose control of the vehicle and be involved in an accident; if the driver or freight handler opens the trailer doors at the destination and some of the cargo spills out of the back of the vehicle, injuring him/her; if the cargo is loaded improperly so a heavy piece of cargo is loaded at the top of the cargo and it slips and falls on a driver or material handler during the unloading process; the people that loaded the vehicle will have a difficult time separating themselves from liability for these types of accidents. Cargo must be adequately secured within the cargo vehicle by some cargo securement system or devices. Doors are not cargo securement devices.

In some cases, cargo is loaded on flatbed equipment visible to everyone. This does not necessarily change the shippers responsibility. If the load has been loaded in a manner that

makes inspection of its cargo impracticable then the shipper may retain the same responsibility for its safety.

The federal regulations applicable to loading of cargo do not apply to shippers but they do establish the standards by which cargo is to be loaded and secured. Shippers that regularly transport their goods should have an advanced level of knowledge how to safely load them, secure them for transport, as well as what is involved to safely unload them. When they do not, they may be exposed to lengthy and costly litigation they never thought they may have to deal with.

Acrylamide, used in medical laboratories was recently shown to be a carcinogen to the nervous system. The use of cellular phones has been extensively investigated as a possible cause

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