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Worldwide shipping continues to endure stormy waters

It's safe to say that the worldwide container shipping industry has been facing some unique and extreme challenges over the past couple of years... and these show no signs of diminishing any time soon.

Ships carry around 90% of the world's trade and, although this vital global network was, in truth, losing its momentum even before the emergence of COVID-19, the pandemic was a severe blow to an already stretched industry sector.

As worldwide COVID restrictions began to relent at the start of this year, many operators were optimistic of global marine transport returning to near-normal. Then, out of the blue, came the war in Ukraine - a major producer of steel, energy, oil and neon gas, quickly followed by rocketing fuel prices, the fresh wave of lockdowns in Shanghai - the world's largest seaport - and other several key factors.

A Shanghai surprise!

Shanghai is the economic and commercial capital of China, as well as being the world's sixth largest city. In March 2022, Shanghai's authorities confined almost all of its 25 million plus residents to their homes, in the midst of its most severe battle against COVID in two years. Given Shanghai's status as the world's largest port, these restrictions have contributed significantly to a major supply chain disaster that's, in turn, impacted almost every country around the world.

Since mid-April, major marine transport corporations such as Yang Ming, Ocean Network Express and Hapag Lloyd have cancelled over 36 separate voyages to Shanghai.

Equipment & Space Shortages

One of the most significant reasons for the current delays in the container shipping industry, is the lack of available equipment and shortage of space whilst in port. Furthermore, these damaging twin factors are conspiring to drive up shipping prices in certain lanes across the global ocean freight network.

Congestion at ports

The crippling congestion across the major US and European ports has also been a major contributing factor to the present situation regarding global shipping delays. This congestion is the result of an increase in demand for goods across the US, as well as the fall-out of the lockdowns implemented to contain the spread of COVID there, at the height of the pandemic.

Issues with customs

Shipment delays to the UK have also been caused by changes to customs declarations following Brexit. The new checks at major UK container ports

started from 1st January 2022 and have resulted in a drop in imports, as well as delay for cargoes coming from European countries. Moreover, the full border checks in place from July 2022 will result in further delays of cargo and freight to and from EU-member nations.

Our solution

To avoid further shipping delays, we recommend you plan well in advance and use forecasting software, to ensure port space and equipment availability. We're also advising you to source warranted, fit-for-purpose, second-hand equipment suppliers where possible, particularly in the field of electrical components.

Lastly, in order to mitigate the worst effects of the current supply chain crisis, we are also suggesting that our clients actively consider alternative shipping methods, such as air freight or road transportation.

At Turner & Coates, we're always on hand to help you build more lead time into your projects, helping you avoid additional disappointment and further hold-ups. Call us now to find out more!



Turbulent times for marine transport: the world's global supply chain remains at breaking point, amid continued volatility in the ocean freight sector.

Contact us now on +44 (0)161 660 8656 to discover how we could help your business!

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