

REEFER CARRIERS, DISPATCHERS, LOADERS, TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED SHIPPERS, AND RECEIVERS

Reefer Load Readiness Toolkit

Turn a reefer posting and shipment handoff into a documented pickup-readiness review without inventing a universal temperature rule.

Use the interactive web worksheet and this printable record to compare all-mile economics while preserving written temperature instructions, responsibility boundaries, trailer condition, pre-cooling, unit settings, monitoring evidence, seal details, and exception handling. This toolkit compares entered setpoints; it does not choose a temperature, certify food safety, or approve a load.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Read the gates

2. Print the worksheet

3. Record actual results

Reviewed July 20, 2026 | Complete web version: loadladder.com/resources/reefer-load-readiness-toolkit

WORKFLOW 1 OF 6

Gate 1 - Preserve the written shipment handoff

Record the responsible parties and current written instructions instead of substituting a generic temperature or procedure.

[]	Commodity and condition Record commodity, packaging, count, weight, declared condition, loading method, and incompatibility concerns.
[]	Sanitary specifications Preserve vehicle, cleaning, sanitation, segregation, design, and prior-cargo requirements.
[]	Operating temperature Record setpoint, acceptable range, unit, mode, pre-cooling, monitoring, and escalation instructions.
[]	Responsibility agreement Identify shipper, loader, carrier, and receiver tasks and any written reassignment of duties.

WORKFLOW 2 OF 6

Gate 2 - Verify source, counterparty, and economics

A reefer load still requires current source facts, a verified counterparty, workable appointments, written terms, and carrier approval.

[]	Current source Keep the source, load ID, recheck time, locations, stops, commodity, weight, appointments, and unknowns attached.
[]	Company and contact Compare legal identity, current official records when applicable, domain, phone, and payment instructions.
[]	All-mile estimate Include loaded miles, deadhead, expected repositioning, truck-specific cost, washout, lumper, reefer fuel, and detention exposure.
[]	Appointments and accessories Confirm windows, loading, detention evidence, lumper, rejected-product, washout, layover, and TONU terms.

WORKFLOW 3 OF 6

Gate 3 - Inspect the exact trailer and unit

A reefer label does not establish sanitary condition, maintenance status, fuel, alarms, capacity, or temperature-control capability.

[]	Physical and sanitary condition Inspect doors, seals, floor, walls, airflow path, drains, odor, debris, pests, damage, and prior-cargo evidence.
[]	Cleaning and prior cargo Record cleaning, washout, and prior-cargo evidence required by the shipper, facility, contract, or procedure.
[]	Unit and fuel Complete the carrier inspection, check alarms and maintenance status, and confirm fuel or energy for trip and delay exposure.
[]	Payload and loading fit Confirm weight limits, pallet count, airflow, segregation, load bars or securement, and door clearance.

WORKFLOW 4 OF 6

Gate 4 - Match settings and monitoring to instructions

Compare the written setpoint with the unit display. The comparison does not establish the correct temperature or product condition.

[]	Pre-cooling If required, record compartment temperature and time before loading. If not required, preserve that written direction.
[]	Setpoint and mode Match the written setpoint and operating mode to the unit. Stop on a mismatch or missing instruction.
[]	Temperature evidence Agree on requested evidence such as loading and unloading readings or time-temperature data.
[]	Deviation response Record notification, hold, escalation, and qualified disposition steps for alarms, deviations, failure, seal, or contamination issues.

WORKFLOW 5 OF 6

Gate 5 - Control loading and pickup handoff

Separate observed equipment settings and ambient readings from product-temperature or food-safety claims.

[]	Loader verification Record acceptance of equipment preparation, pre-cooling when required, sanitary condition, count, and loading pattern.
[]	Readings and devices Record device IDs, verification method when required, actual readings, location, time, and person taking them.
[]	Seal and documents Record seal, BOL, temperature instructions, rate confirmation, accessorial process, and discrepancies before departure.
[]	Driver handoff Provide monitoring cadence, alarm response, fuel plan, route constraints, contact chain, and stop-work triggers.

WORKFLOW 6 OF 6

Gate 6 - Record decision and actual result

This worksheet organizes review; the authorized carrier and responsible parties retain their decisions and duties.

[]	Carrier decision Record approval, rejection, conditions, open questions, decision owner, and time.
[]	In-transit exceptions Preserve alarm, delay, setting, fuel, door, seal, damage, contamination, rejection, and communication events.
[]	Delivery evidence Record arrival, setting, requested temperature evidence, seal, receiver observations, documents, and disposition.
[]	Planned versus actual Compare miles, fuel, dwell, accessorial recovery, service, exceptions, and estimated versus actual cost.

PRINT REEFER PICKUP READINESS RECORD

Preserve the original estimate or review. Add actual results separately so the decision process can improve.

Field	Working value
Source / load ID / recheck time	_____
Parties / commodity / packaging / weight	_____
Pickup / delivery / appointments	_____
Written setpoint / range / unit / mode	_____
Unit setpoint / mode	_____
Pre-cool requirement / reading / time	_____
Trailer / unit / cleaning / prior cargo	_____
Readings / device / seal / BOL / exception	_____
Loaded / deadhead / reposition miles	_____
Gross rate / cost per mile / trip costs	_____
All-mile RPM / estimated margin	_____
Carrier decision / owner / time	_____

FINAL REVIEW

☐	Written instructions, party responsibilities, and agreements preserved
☐	Current source, counterparty, terms, and appointments reviewed
☐	Trailer, unit, sanitary condition, fuel, and alarms inspected
☐	Pre-cooling completed as specified or documented not required
☐	Written and unit setpoints and mode match
☐	Loading record, readings, devices, seal, and documents ready
☐	Monitoring, alarm response, contact chain, and hold process confirmed
☐	Carrier decision and actual-result review recorded

SOURCES AND BOUNDARIES

Use current authoritative records

These links are starting points for current official information. Requirements and records can change. This resource is not legal, tax, insurance, accounting, safety, or financial advice. It does not replace source terms, qualified professional review, carrier approval, or a counterparty's current requirements.

FDA FSMA Sanitary Transportation final rule overview	https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/fsma-final-rule-sanitary-transportation-human-and-animal-food
FDA sanitary transportation questions and answers	https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/frequently-asked-questions-fsma
FDA small-entity compliance guide	https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/small-entity-compliance-guide-sanitary-transportation-human-and-animal-food-what-you-need-know-about
FDA carrier training for the Sanitary Transportation Rule	https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/training-carriers-covered-sanitary-transportation-human-and-animal-food-rule
FMCSA SAFER Company Snapshot	https://safer.fmcsa.dot.gov/CompanySnapshot.aspx

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