



How shipping costs will change in upcoming LTL classification shift

The National Motor Freight Code overhaul will focus on density, so denser shipments will become cheaper while less dense ones will become more expensive.

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A. Duie Pyle driver Jesse Weeks delivers LTL shipments to customers in the Baltimore area on May 1, 2024. LTL shipping costs are set to change this summer with an update to the National Motor Freight Code. Colin Campbell/Supply Chain Dive

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Editor's note: This story has been updated to clarify the rate changes shown are examples related to a specific type of shipment.

Most shippers' top concern about the LTL trucking classification overhaul coming this summer is how it will affect their costs.

The short answer? It depends on the density of the shipment, so recording weight and dimensions becomes key.

Once the National Motor Freight Classification system is updated in July, some shipments will become more expensive, some will retain the same rate, and others will become less expensive.

“It is the biggest changes in classification in the history of classification,” said Joe Ohr, COO of the National Motor Freight Traffic Association, in an interview.

Shippers should talk to their carriers and third-party logistics providers for specifics about how the classification overhaul will affect their costs. But to provide a preview of the upcoming changes, Trucking Dive pulled together a brief example of how the cost of a shipment of boots will be adjusted under the new system.

What will get more expensive?

Costs for the least dense shipments will soar.

As LTL carriers are primarily paid by the weight, that’s intended to account for the space they take up on a carrier’s trailer without much weight.

The price increases will affect shipments with densities lower than 4 pounds per cubic foot, according to a white paper published by SMC³.

Less dense shipments to see shipping costs rise

Cost increases for shipments of boots, by pounds per cubic foot

Density from	Density up to	Original class	New class	Estimated cost increase
0	1	200	400	97%
1	2	200	300	49%
2	4	200	250	24%

What will get less expensive?

The classification code shift will reward industrial and other trucking customers that typically ship denser freight with savings.

Shipments between 4 and 6 pounds per cubic foot, and those heavier than 8 pounds per cubic foot, will become less expensive under the new system.

More dense shipments to see costs fall

Cost decreases for shipments of boots, by pounds per cubic foot

Density from	Density up to	Original class	New class	Estimated cost decrease
4	6	200	175	-12%
8	10	125	100	-19%
10	12	125	92.5	-24%
12	15	125	85	-29%
15	22.5	125	70	-38%
22.5	30	125	65	-42%
30	35	125	60	-45%
35	50	125	55	-47%
50	50+	125	50	-50%

What will stay the same?

Some shippers will pay the same as they do now.

The cost for shipments with a density between 6 and 8 pounds per cubic foot should remain the same.

One freight class won't see any change

Costs that will stay the same for shipments of boots, by pounds per cubic foot

Density from	Density up to	Original class	New class	Estimated cost change
6	8	125	125	0%