This document provides guidelines for shippers, carriers, and consignees on the appropriate actions to take when freight is received damaged or is missing, ensuring timely resolution and minimal financial impact.

**1. Initial Inspection Upon Delivery**

* **Visual Inspection**: Examine the packaging and goods immediately upon arrival.
* **Note Discrepancies**: If there is visible damage or freight is missing, clearly note this on the **Bill of Lading (BOL)**
* **Take Photos**: Document all damage with time-stamped photographs from multiple angles.
* **Keep Packaging**: Do not discard packaging materials as they may be required for inspection by the carrier or insurer.

**2. Accept or Refuse Delivery**

* **Damaged Freight**: You may accept damaged goods with notation or refuse them entirely. Accepting with notation is often preferable to allow faster inspection and settlement.
* **Missing Freight**: If items are missing, note “shortage” on the BOL and count all received items.

**3. Notify Relevant Parties**

* **Carrier Notification**: Contact the carrier immediately—ideally within 24 hours. Most carriers require written notification within a specific timeframe.
* **Shipper Notification**: Inform the shipper of the issue, especially if you are the consignee.
* **Insurance Company**: If cargo insurance is involved, notify the insurer promptly with evidence.

**4. File a Freight Claim**

* **Time Limits**: File claims promptly—most carriers allow up to 9 months for damage or loss claims but sooner is better.
* **Required Documents**:
  + Copy of the BOL/delivery receipt with damage/shortage noted
  + Original invoice showing value of goods
  + Proof of loss or damage (photos, inspection report, etc.)
  + Repair or replacement estimate (if applicable)
  + Claim form (carrier-specific)
* **Keep Copies**: Retain copies of all correspondence and documentation.

**5. Carrier Inspection**

* Carriers may inspect the damage or request that the damaged goods be held for inspection.
* Do **not dispose** of damaged items or packaging until permission is given by the carrier or claim is settled.

**6. Follow Up**

* Maintain regular contact with the carrier and insurer for updates.
* Record dates of all communications and actions taken.
* Be persistent and professional in following up to expedite the claim process.

**7. Preventative Measures**

* **Proper Packaging**: Ensure goods are packed securely and according to carrier standards.
* **Labeling**: Clearly mark packages with handling instructions.
* **Carrier Selection**: Work with reputable carriers with strong freight handling procedures and claim resolution processes.
* **Insurance**: Consider purchasing additional cargo insurance for high-value shipments.

**Conclusion**  
Taking swift action, keeping detailed documentation, and maintaining clear communication greatly increase the likelihood of successfully resolving damaged or missing freight claims.