

1 May 2026: Staying on top of Manual Handling Fees

For many years, TNT and Startrack have been charging Manual Handling Fees to parcels that cannot freely move through conveyor systems.

IN THE INTEREST OF SAFETY of depot staff, sorting equipment, and other shipments, such parcels are manually handled in depots. Here's a quick guide on Manual Handling Fees.

Common QUALITATIVE Reasons

- Shipments that are not in a rectangular cardboard carton boxes with even sides – such as plastic bags, envelopes, sacks, drums, cylinders, uneven sided cartons, plastic cartons, cartons wrapped in plastic, cartons wrapped in tape, cartons with straps – anything that could stick on conveyor systems and cause damage to other shipments and to the conveyor system itself.

TNT and Startrack air freight services do not charge manual handling fees to shipments in standard satchels

- Shipments with fragile, delicate, 'this side up', 'handle with care' stickers – depot staff wouldn't want to damage your goods. If they see these stickers, they wouldn't let your shipment travel on conveyor systems fearing that they tumble and break, and will manually handle them instead.
- Shipments without fragile markings but contain fragile goods like glassware – based on declared description of goods, depot staff will not allow fragile goods on conveyor systems and manually handle them to avoid possible breakage.

Overused and damaged cardboard cartons that are too delicate for conveyor systems will also be manually handled by depot staff.

- Shipments that contain liquid, nails, magnets or any dangerous / hazardous substances – such goods may leak or spill then damage conveyor systems, other shipments and risk health and safety of depot staff.

Common QUANTITATIVE Reasons

- Exceeding TNT weight and dimensions thresholds
- Minimum dimensions of 20cm x 10cm x 1.5cm
- Maximum dimensions of 120cm x 60cm x 80cm
- Maximum diagonal length 120cm
- Minimum dead weight of 0.25kg
- Maximum dead weight of 30kg
- Exceeding Startrack weight and dimensions thresholds
- Cartons on Road Express – minimum dimensions of 5cm; maximum dead weight of 20kg; maximum dimensions of 117cm x 60cm x 60cm
- Pallets on Road Express – maximum dimensions of 117cm x 117cm x 179cm
- Fixed Price Premium / Premium Air Freight – maximum dimensions of 100cm x 60cm x 60cm; maximum dead weight of 22kg

How do I ensure that Manual Handling Fees are reflected in my quotes in Webship?

Manual Handling Fees are automatically added to your quotes as you enter your shipment's dimensions and weights in Webship. Never under-declare your measurements because carriers reweigh and remeasure your goods twice at both origin and destination depots and use those measurements to bill you. You will not save money by under-declaring measurements...not at all!

On the other hand, even if your shipment is within carrier thresholds but your shipment possesses Manual Handling qualities, tick the "Manual Handling Fees" checkbox in Webship and enter the number of items that applies. Manual Handling Fees are charged by item, so make sure that you accurately declare this.

This is a special feature that is only available to Australian Webship users.

Can I dispute Manual Handling Fees?

Yes. If you think that you got wrongly charged by the carrier with Manual Handling Fees, please provide the following supporting evidence to your Dedicated Freight Consultant, which the carrier will require prior processing.

- Photos of weight, length, width and height are required
- Each photo will need to show 3 sides of the full body of the package to prove that it did not have any fragile stickers
- Photos must clearly show readings at the front with the end of the tape measure at the opposite end of the dimension in one frame
- It is okay to send photos of a replica with the same measurements and qualities of the original package

My non-fragile shipment in a cardboard carton is within size thresholds but still incurred Manual Handling Fees, why?

Your carton may be within thresholds...when it is empty. Avoid overfilling your cartons to a point that parts of it bulge. Carriers, using RFID measuring equipment, measure the longest length, longest width, and longest height of parcels, and when a carton bulges, the bulging part becomes the basis of reading.

Avoid flaps on cartons' edges as well by neatly packing and taping your parcels. Flaps would also unnecessarily increase your dimensions and RFID measuring equipment will capture them.

I sent unsortable items before, but did not have to pay Manual Handling Fees, why?

Manual Handling Fees due to the qualities of a shipment are lodged by depot staff manually; inspection is purely ocular. TNT and Startrack process thousands of shipments a day and depot staff may not capture every single shipment that warrants the fee.

Should you require clarifications on this, do not hesitate to reach out to your Freight Consultant or Account Manager for further guidance. Thank you.