



# Road Haulage Association Limited

## CONDITIONS OF CARRIAGE 2026

### Explanatory Notes

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#### **BACKGROUND**

These terms and conditions are to be used by the members of the Road Haulage Association (RHA) with fully-paid up memberships and can be incorporated into contracts they have with their customers. They are a set of terms and conditions which – if incorporated correctly – will have contractual effect on both parties to an agreement as if they were part of the original contract. The manner in which they have been drafted tilts them in favour of the carrier and so it is naturally recommended that all RHA members incorporate these terms into all of their consignment contracts.

**Please note that these terms and conditions may only be used by RHA Members and cannot be used by anyone who does not pay their membership subscription, unless they are explicitly permitted to do so by someone within the RHA with the authority to authorise such a decision.**

In order to incorporate these terms, there are some considerations the member must have when quoting and invoicing their customers. These terms will not have contractual effect and will not bind the parties to an agreement unless the customer is aware at the time of agreement to contract that they are terms that the member uses. This means that an RHA Member hoping to use these terms must make it explicitly clear to their customers at the outset that they will be using these terms and conditions when carrying or storing goods. We recommend that a quote or some form of ticket or documentation be provided to the customer with the below wording explicitly and obviously displayed:

*'[COMPANY NAME] uses the Road Haulage Association Conditions of Carriage as they may be amended from time to time, and these terms and conditions shall have effect to the exclusion of all other terms including the customer's own.'*

The method of giving the above statement is not necessarily important, however if written down, copies and records of the fact that the statement was given can be kept. We advise that the customer be made clear that these terms and conditions will be used at the time the RHA Member gives their quotes or terms of business to their customer, which means at the outset of contract, job or consignment discussions. We also recommend that throughout the performance of the contract, job or consignment, the terms and conditions are consistently referred to on the bottom of emails and on other correspondence exchanged with the customer, as well as being referenced on the final invoice once the work has been carried out. This makes it undeniably clear that the customer understands that the RHA Member operates under these terms and conditions and that these are the terms that apply to the contract.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

There is little that has changed in terms of definitions between the newly issued Conditions of Carriage and the previous conditions. The definitions operate to clarify the main body of the terms

and the defined terms are used throughout the conditions. The only update to the definitions in the latest edition of the Conditions of Carriage is in respect of a 'Force Majeure Event' and these amendments have been made following feedback from RHA Members on this point.

The definition of a Force Majeure Event is set out in Condition 10(2)(c) and the effect of the amendment to this clause is to limit the circumstances when a fire would constitute a Force Majeure Event. The amendment means that the carrier's liability in respect of losses arising from a fire would only be excluded where the fire was caused by the customer or consignee.

Road accidents have also been removed from the list of Force Majeure Events set out in Condition 10(2)(c). This means that the carrier would be liable for loss of or damage to goods arising as a result of a road accident.

### **PARTIES AND SUB-CONTRACTING**

There have been no updates to this section. Clause 2(2) makes it explicitly clear that the RHA Member or carrier under these terms has the right to assign and delegate (among other actions) their obligations and rights under the contract between the member and their customer to a third-party. Essentially, this makes clear that in certain circumstances, whilst the customer may be contracting with the RHA Member, it may be another individual (i.e. a sub-contractor) carrying out the work under these terms and conditions.

### **DANGEROUS GOODS**

Where the carriage of dangerous goods is concerned, the carrier's safety and the safety of other members of the public and road users is a top priority. In order to ensure that these are maintained, it is vital that the RHA Member is informed that they will be carrying dangerous goods and that they have the right to rescind the contract if this is not disclosed to them explicitly in writing.

In furtherance of the above, the customer also agrees where the goods are dangerous, and this is communicated to the member, to categorise and mark at their own expense those goods.

### **LOADING AND UNLOADING**

In the business of road transport, it is important to know where your risks start and end. Under the Conditions, the default position is that the customer is responsible for loading the goods onto the vehicle of the RHA Member (or its sub-contractor) and the consignee is responsible for the unloading of those goods from that vehicle. Whilst this is the default position, we acknowledge that in a lot of cases it may be the carrier who is actually responsible for loading and unloading, which is permitted, provided it is agreed separately in writing, i.e. in the original quote or order acceptance.

Under the newly issued terms, the RHA Member or carrier is excluded from being found liable for loss or damage done to goods that arise from the loading onto or unloading off the vehicle or from overloading the vehicle, except where it has been agreed that the loading and/or unloading would be carried out by the carrier. Further to this, the customer indemnifies the carrier under these terms against any loss, damage, death or injury that might arise during loading and/or unloading or as a result of how the vehicle has been loaded, however the updated Conditions now carve out that this

indemnity will not apply where such loss was due to the negligence of the carrier or where it has been agreed that the carrier is responsible for loading and/or unloading.

In respect of the actual loading onto the vehicle, the customer is required to ensure that any necessary equipment to be used for such activities is in functional condition and the customer further indemnifies the carrier against loss, damage or death that might come about due to faulty or inappropriate equipment and obliges the Customer to ensure that any equipment is only operated by personnel who are suitably trained.

There are further provisions included relating to the personnel involved in the actual loading and unloading of the vehicles. Where the carrier or member's staff or personnel are carrying out the loading or unloading, but those individuals take instructions from the customer, and they are given instructions that do not operate in conjunction with Condition 4(3) as contained in the conditions, then the member is not liable. The customer also agrees to indemnify the carrier or member against all demands and claims that arise out of the member's personnel complying with the instructions of the customer or where the carrier has not been allowed reasonable opportunity to inspect a consignment which has been loaded by the customer or consignee.

The conditions also allow for the carrier to refuse to enter any site which the Carrier or the Carrier's driver does not consider to be safe to enter.

These terms essentially seek to nail down the points in the loading and unloading process for which the customer indemnifies the RHA Member and which the RHA Member is not liable for, and also what the member may be considered liable for. The latest updates to the Conditions seek to make this provision fairer to the customer where the carrier is responsible for loading and unloading.

### **OBLIGATIONS OF THE CUSTOMER**

By virtue of this clause, the customer with whom the RHA Member is contracting warrants that the goods or consignment which they require moving will not pollute the environment or do harm to human health and make clear that it should not need official consent to be moved by the RHA Member, in the sense that all licences and approvals should already have been acquired. The customer also warrants to provide the carrier with the necessary information and/or materials to comply with its legal obligations under domestic and – if applicable – EU legislation, including information relating to the weight and contents of the Consignment.

In the event that the carrier's performance is delayed as a consequence of the actions of the customer, then the member is entitled to suspend performance of its obligations until the situation is remedied by the customer. In doing so, the member or carrier will not be liable for costs of losses sustained or incurred, and the customer shall reimburse the member or carrier for their own incurred costs or losses.

There is also an obligation on the customer to ensure that drivers are allowed access to all available welfare facilities at the collection and delivery locations.

### **RECEIPTS**

This section sets out that where requested, the Carrier will provide to the Customer a record of the acknowledgement of receipt of a Consignment, however it places the burden of proof on the Customer to prove that the condition of any consignment was unsatisfactory. This term also sets out that the Customer will not be entitled to withhold any payment of the Carrier's charges where any such proof of delivery is not provided by the Carrier.

## **TRANSIT**

The latest update to the Conditions amends what is deemed to constitute 'transit'. Transit still commences after the consignment has left the premises from which they were collected, however, the updated Conditions now provide that Transit ends once the consignment is tendered at the proper place of delivery. 'Tendered' essentially means the time at which the goods are made available to the customer or consignee. This arrangement may, however, be contracted out of – as can most of the terms under these conditions. If alternative arrangements are required, these can be agreed in writing.

When the consignment is not in transit, it shall be at the sole risk of the customer.

## **UNDELIVERED OR UNCLAIMED CONSIGNMENTS**

These terms give guidance where the carrier or RHA Member carrying out transport services are unable to deliver a consignment. In such circumstances the carrier may sell the consignment and payment or tender of the proceeds after the deduction of charges incurred by the member shall discharge the carrier of all liabilities in respect of the consignment. That being said, there are criteria for the member of carrier to satisfy if they wish to exercise this right:

1. They must do what is reasonable in order to obtain the value of the goods – this essentially means that there must be some negotiation and discussion aiming at bringing in the market value, at least, of the consignment. The member cannot simply settle to sell the goods to discharge themselves.
2. The carrier or member must be aware of the name and address of the sender of the goods, load or consignment as the carrier must give that entity or individual notice as to what they intend to do. They must give the entity or individual a reasonable time in which to respond or to take away the load, goods or consignment.

## **CARRIER'S CHARGES**

Any charges which the carrier issues to the customer shall be payable by the customer without prejudice to the carrier's rights against the consignee. These charges must be paid when due and there can be no attempts from the customer to set-off any other claim or outstanding amount that they may have accounted for against the carrier or RHA Member. This means that the customer must pay the charges and then only seek any other form of recoup for a separate matter at a later point. It is important and made overtly clear under condition 9(3) that the carrier or RHA Member use reasonable endeavours to obtain a signed proof of delivery of the load. It may be agreed otherwise with the customer; however, we would recommend acquiring a proof of delivery note for your own records regardless. That being said, there is no right of the customer to withhold payment where no

proof of delivery is provided, unless a notification of non-delivery is given to the carrier or RHA Member within 48 hours after the expected delivery time.

Where a contract is cancelled at any point during its performance, the customer has agreed under these terms to pay the carrier or member all costs and expenses incurred prior to the cancellation.

In response to feedback from members, a new Condition 9(4) has been included which provides that where the consignment is lost or damaged, the carrier's charges will not be payable by the customer in relation to that delivery, unless the customer requests redelivery, in which case only the redelivery charge will be payable.

### **LIMITATION OF LIABILITY**

This section pertains to more general liabilities which may arise under the contract with your customer, inclusive of but not limited to costs, taxes, fines or duties which might arise during the performance of the contract. That being said, in accordance with the tests of reasonableness and in consideration of legislation relating to the fairness of contracts, there are instances where we are not able to totally exclude or limit liability. For example, where it is deemed unfair to totally exclude liability for damage done to goods, the liability of the carrier or member is limited to the actual value of the goods, any reparation costs or a sum calculated at the rate of £1,300.00 per tonne on the gross weight of the goods lost or damaged. With respect to wholly excluded liabilities, these conditions exclude:

- loss of profits;
- loss of sales or business;
- loss of agreements or contracts
- loss of anticipated savings;
- loss of use or corruption of software, data or information;
- loss of or damage to goodwill; and
- indirect or consequential loss;
- any fines imposed on the Customer by the Consignee or its customer.

### **INDEMNITY TO THE CARRIER**

This is essentially the method by which the customer agrees to indemnify and cover the carrier of the goods or RHA Member, by agreeing to the contract incorporating these terms and conditions the customer agrees to grant this indemnity. The coverage is for all liabilities and costs incurred by the carrier and/or member as a result of a breach of the conditions by the customer where that breach occurs through error, omission, mis-statement or misrepresentation. There is further coverage provided by the customer for all claims and demands in excess of the liability of the carrier or member under these conditions.

### **TIME LIMITS FOR CLAIMS**

The Customer must notify the Carrier of any claims for any loss or damage to goods within 7 days after transit has terminated and the Carrier will not be liable for any claims brought after this 7 day

limit. This term also provides that not only does the Customer have to notify of any claims within the 7 days limit, they also have to provide reasonable evidence to support any such claim.

## **LIEN**

The lien is one of the most important tools under these conditions. It grants an explicit interest on behalf of the carrier and/or member in the consignment, load or goods. The lien itself is activated where the customer has overdue amounts owed to the carrier or RHA Member and/or has accrued charges. The carrier or member can take control of the goods, loads or consignment. There are two liens granted: 1) a particular lien against the consignment, load or goods, focusing on the charges outstanding in respect of that consignment, and 2) a general lien against the trader to whom the goods belong for all and any outstanding sums or unpaid invoices, not just those relating to the consignment.

If, having received notice and adequate time with which to respond, the customer still does not satisfy outstanding charges, then the carrier or member will be entitled to sell the goods, load or consignment or the relevant part of that consignment to recover the amount owed to them. Any surplus to that amount should be returned to the customer.

The reason this lien is made explicitly clear is so that there is no doubt that the carrier or member has the right to hold the goods and sell them on. If this is not done, then the carrier or member leaves themselves vulnerable to litigation and other complaints from their customers or owners of the goods.

Whilst this clause and the contractual right it asserts is an incredibly useful tool for the carrier, it has to be exercised with caution to ensure the exercise of this right does not inadvertently create claims and liabilities against the carrier, particularly where the customer is not the owner of the consignment or where the customer is in administration.

**It is therefore strongly advised that where the owner of the goods and the customer are not one and the same or where the customer is insolvent, specific legal advice should be obtained before exercising this right.**

## **CONCLUSION**

The above advice and explanatory notes should adequately explain the key mechanisms of the Road Haulage Association Conditions of Carriage 2026 and the effect that they may have on commercial contracts between RHA Members and their customers. It is important to note that these terms are to be used when contracting for transport services and would offer little if the member were contracting for some other service that they may provide. They are drafted in favour of the haulier and so we would recommend that they are incorporated into every contract for transport or distribution as outlined at the beginning of these explanatory notes.