

Getting Started With Railcar Tracking & Tracing Checklist

The rail shipping industry encompasses a vast and complex system, particularly with railcar tracking and tracing. Success in this industry demands a deep understanding, and a thorough and well-planned approach. This guide will equip you with just that - both in terms of tracking processes and the use of automation for efficient operations.

The first section explores the manual tracking process. The necessary steps include creating a user profile on each railroad’s website, identifying the railcar numbers, using railroad websites to track railcars, understanding the data, and monitoring regularly.

The second portion discusses the essentials of an automated tracking solution. Key aspects to consider are data accuracy, robust reporting features, usability, customization options, customer support, system adaptability, and data consolidation capabilities. Special mention is given to the features of RSI Logistics’ Rail Command® application.

With the knowledge from this guide, you’ll be well-positioned to optimize your railcar tracking operations using a data-driven decision-making approach.

Key Component for Successful Railcar Tracking and Tracing Establishment

In the realm of Railcar Tracking and Tracing, the manual process serves as a pivotal starting point. This hands-on routine is detail-oriented, factoring in crucial steps to set the groundwork for potential progression to more advanced systems. The process includes essential steps that are not just add-ons but prerequisites - they act as the skeletal framework for successful railcar tracking and tracing. Upon successful execution of these, the door to more advanced, automated systems opens up. Therefore, it’s important to get these basics right from the outset to build upon a solid foundation.

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| | <p>1. Creating a User Profile: Have you established your user profiles with the online tracking systems of railroads that are relevant to you? (BNSF, Union Pacific, CSX, Norfolk Southern, Canadian National, etc.)</p> <p>All major North American railroads provide online tracking features on their websites. Websites like BNSF, Union Pacific, CSX, Norfolk Southern, Canadian National, among many others, have their own systems for tracking railcars.</p> |
| | <p>2. Identifying the Railcar Number: Can you successfully confirm your railcar’s unique reporting mark’s presence on the Bill of Lading for your shipment?</p> <p>Each railcar in North America is marked with a unique identifier known as a Reporting Mark. This is typically a four-letter code followed by a series six number. The railcar number is usually painted on the side of a railcar, which is also retrofitted with an Automatic Equipment Identification (AEI) device. Railcar numbers can be obtained from the Bill of Lading for your railcar shipment.</p> |
| | <p>3. Tracking Railcars with Railroad Websites: Have you ensured your company is part of the Bill of Lading, and do you know how to input the railcar number into the tracking systems to access location and status information?</p> <p>Once you have access to railroad websites, you can enter the railcar number you want to track. The system should then provide you with information about the railcar’s current location and status. To get this information your company must be part of the Bill of Lading.</p> |

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| | <p>4. Understanding the Data: Are you familiar with the type of data provided by the tracking systems, such as current location, estimated arrival and destination, Bill of Lading information, and movement trip plan? And have you considered how this data might be able to help you in logistics planning, scheduling, and security, and other purposes?</p> <p>The results you receive often include the railcar's current location, estimated arrival and destination, Bill of Lading information, and sometimes the movement trip plan. This data can be used for a variety of purposes, including scheduling personnel, logistics planning, and security.</p> |
| | <p>5. Monitoring Regularly: Have you set up a consistent schedule to monitor the railcar's journey, especially in case of long routes or periods? Are you prepared to adjust actions based on potential delays, misroutes, or required repairs?</p> <p>If you need to track the railcar of a long route or period of time, you'll need to monitor using the railroad websites on a regular basis. Depending on your specific needs, you may need to monitor the railcar on a daily basis. This can be a time-consuming task, but it is necessary as the railcar could be delayed, misrouted, or flagged for repairs.</p> |
| | <p>6. Are you prepared to manage a plethora of <u>Microsoft Excel documents</u> for documenting and reporting information?</p> <p>Data Management: Establish an organized data management process for efficiently handling railcar tracking and tracing information, either through Microsoft Excel spreadsheets or alternative software.</p> |
| | <p>7. Do you have the tools and knowledge for executing shipments on the specific RR websites and navigating their interfaces?</p> <p>Shipment Execution Knowledge: Familiarize yourself with each specific RR website to fluently execute shipments, navigate interfaces, and manage railcars with ease.</p> |
| | <p>8. Are you comfortable with manually <u>auditing and validating various bills from RRs</u>?</p> <p>To ensure comfort in manually auditing and validating Railroad (RR) bills, focus on comprehending industry-specific billing practices and leveraging auditing software tools to enhance accuracy and analytical capabilities within your operational endeavors.</p> |

Key Components for an Automated Track & Trace System

Considering an automated solution for railcar tracking and tracing may initially seem like an optional luxury, but its inherent benefits make it highly advantageous. By pooling data in real-time, it ensures swift access to accurate, up-to-date information critical for effective decision-making and operation management. Furthermore, it provides comprehensive reports that offer a holistic view of operation status, enabling data-driven strategic planning. Besides offering a user-friendly interface for reduced margin of errors, it can also adapt to align with your company's growth trajectory. This kind of software usually brings along dedicated customer support and customization options. In essence, an automated system can consolidate vast amounts of information, enhancing efficiency, and thereby transforming an 'optional' tool into an essential component of prosperous railcar tracking and tracing operation.

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| | 1. Does the railcar tracking and tracing software provide up-to-date, accurate information to ensure reliable tracking? Up-to-date, Accurate Information: Constant, real-time updates in a railcar tracking system are vital for effective management and decision-making, thus confirming the accuracy and timeliness of data is integral. |
| | 2. Is the software designed to deliver comprehensive and holistic data reporting that's easy to interpret and offers consumable content? Holistic Data Reporting: A system that offers comprehensive reporting capabilities ensures a 360-degree overview of operations, enabling informed decisions and strategic operations planning. |
| | 3. Does the software offer a user-friendly interface and tools that perform effortlessly with minimal errors? User-friendly Interface: A system that emphasizes usability minimizes error margins and operational delays - a crucial factor for improving efficiency and productivity. |
| | 4. Is the tracking and tracing software affordable and customizable to cater to your organization's unique needs? Affordability and Customizability: Cross-referencing your budget and specific operational needs with potential software solutions will ensure a cost-effective, tailored solution that aligns with your business model. |
| | 5. Will you have access to a dedicated customer service team for prompt issue resolution and ongoing support? Dedicated Customer Service: Support from a dedicated customer service team signifies you'll receive prompt issue resolution, reducing potential downtime and maintaining uninterrupted operations. |
| | 6. Does the software have the ability to evolve and adapt to align with your organization's growth and development? Adaptability: Choosing a system that evolves with your organization's development ensures it remains a reliable asset as the company scales - critical for longevity and return on investment. |
| | 7. Is the software capable of consolidating as much information as possible, promoting greater efficiency in your railcar tracking and tracing operations? Information Consolidation: A system capable of consolidating information increases procedural efficiency by reducing the time spent analyzing disparate data points, a key factor in achieving streamlined operations. |

Key Takeaway

Navigating through the nuances of railcar tracking and tracing requires a solid understanding of manual operations and an appreciation for the benefits of automation. Elevate your operational efficiency through comprehensive, accurate data tracking and integrated reporting provided by automated solutions. Rail Command®, RSI Logistics' premier tracking and tracing software, offers these features and more, designed to adapt to your needs and scale with your growth. Start experiencing enhanced performance and decision-making in your railcar operations. [Contact us for a demo today.](#)