

What is a Bill of Lading (BL)?

A **Bill of Lading** is a legal document issued by a carrier to a shipper. It serves three main purposes:

1. **Receipt of Goods:** It confirms that the carrier has received the goods from the shipper in good condition and as described.
2. **Contract of Carriage:** It outlines the terms and conditions under which the goods are being transported from the origin to the destination.
3. **Document of Title:** It represents ownership of the goods and can be used to transfer ownership while the goods are in transit. This makes it essential in international trade and logistics.

Types of BLs:

Straight Bill of Lading:

This type is non-negotiable, meaning that the goods are consigned to a specific recipient who is the only party entitled to claim them at the destination.

Order Bill of Lading:

This is a negotiable document that can be transferred to another party through endorsement. It allows the seller or shipper to retain control over the goods even while the title is being transferred, which is particularly useful in trade finance and transactions where letters of credit are involved.

Seaway Bill (SWB):

Unlike traditional Bills of Lading, a seaway bill is not a document of title. It is used when there is no need for the transfer of ownership through the document and the goods are released to the consignee directly upon arrival at the destination. A Seawaybill (SWB) is an electronic release which is made automatically, when all prepaid costs are closed.

Who Submits BL Information and Can Make Changes?

All information shown on the Bill of Lading is submitted at origin by the shipper or the shipper's agent. Therefore, only the origin party is authorized to request amendments or changes to the BL.

How to Check the BL Draft

To review the BL draft:

1. Go to the Maersk website
2. Search using your booking number
3. Open the "Documents" tab
4. Download the "Certified True Copy" of the BL

Export related documents

Booking confirmation on 31 Oct 2024, 14:13 UTC	
Original Bill of Lading on 15 Nov 2024, 18:14 UTC	
Certified True Copy of B/L on 15 Nov 2024, 18:14 UTC	

When can the BL be printed?

The Bill of Lading can be printed by the origin office once:

- The containers have been loaded onto the first vessel, and
- All prepaid charges have been settled

The original BL must then be collected by the shipper.

How BL can be released:

In order to release the cargo, the Bill of Lading must first be released.

A BL can be released through one of the following methods:

- Submission of at least one original BL to the Maersk destination office
- Telex Release arranged at the origin office (must be requested by the shipper)
- Original BL printed at the destination office (subject to destination country acceptance and requested by the shipper)
- Seaway Bill (SWB) electronic release, automatically processed once all prepaid charges have been settled

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your usual Maersk representative.

We trust this information is helpful.