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To: Transport Industry Operators

IATA DAWB amendments

Effective 1/7/2026, the Direct Air Waybill (DAWB) framework has been amended by International Air Transport Association in accordance with IATA Cargo Agency Conference Resolutions. A DAWB refers to a shipment structure in which the original shipper (rather than the freight forwarder) is identified directly as the shipper on the Master Air Waybill (MAWB), while the freight forwarder acts on behalf of the original shipper to make the air shipment booking with the airline and the freight forwarder does not issue its House Air Waybill (HAWB). As a result of the IATA DAWB amendments, freight forwarders who tender shipments under DAWBs will be treated as shippers for the purposes of the shipper indemnities and obligations, regardless of the original shippers named as the shippers on the DAWBs. Any alternative arrangements need to be agreed individually on a case-by-case basis by the freight forwarders and the airlines. Freight forwarders will be treated as the shippers under all DAWBs unless the airlines agree otherwise.

For the shipments freight forwarders issue their HAWBs, the IATA DAWB amendments do not change the freight forwarders' current practices. The freight forwarders still name their customers as the shippers and the consignees under their HAWBs. And the freight forwarders and their destination agents are respectively named as the shippers and the consignees under the MAWBs. The freight forwarders are the carriers under their HAWBs and the airlines (being the MAWBs' carriers) are the freight forwarders' subcontractors.

For the shipments freight forwarders act as the agents for their customers to arrange the airlines' MAWBs as the contracts of carriage between the airlines and the freight forwarders' customers, the freight forwarders have to obtain the airlines' agreement to accept that the freight forwarders are only the agents for the original shippers named on the MAWBs and the freight forwarders do not assume any liability or obligations of the MAWB shippers. If the airlines refuse to accept such, the freight forwarders will have to change their roles from being their customers' agents to being the carriers under their HAWBs. The freight forwarders will need to issue their HAWBs to their customers whereas the MAWBs are to be issued to the freight forwarders as the shippers so that the contractual relationships among the freight forwarders' customers, the freight forwarders and the freight forwarders' subcontractors are clear and proper. Accordingly, there will be 2 sets of contracts of carriage i.e. the HAWBs between the freight forwarders' customers and the freight forwarders, and the MAWBs between the freight forwarders and the freight forwarders' subcontractors (i.e. the airlines).

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions on the IATA DAWB amendments.

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