



The Logistics Behind the Camera

Making Movies: Shipping Samurai Swords and Vintage Vehicles

Hollywood studios rely on Packair to get their movie equipment to global filming locations on time and in working order. With over 30 years of experience, Packair knows how to pack and ship cameras, lights, props, film, and other items needed to make movies.

“In our business, it needs to be there yesterday... We’re known for getting the cargo out the same day. We deliver on time.”

– Steve Park, Senior Operations Manager, Packair

At a Glance


Packair Airfreight, Inc.
www.packair.com
Industry

Freight Forwarder and NVOCC

Solution

 Magaya Cargo System,
 Magaya OnTheGo

Freight forwarder Packair of Los Angeles, California, has over 30 years of experience shipping for the film industry. Packair is also a licensed IATA agent and certified with the C-TPAT program. They also offer customs brokerage services, on-site production services, and ship time-sensitive materials for other industries and government agencies.

Challenges

Lights, camera, action! When a film crew is on location, they need all the movie production equipment that is used in a Hollywood studio, sometimes more. Some locations are remote and difficult to reach, subjecting people and equipment to extreme weather conditions such as humid and hilly jungle terrain, wind-blown sand on a desert or beach, or cold and snow, making transport and set up challenging. Getting this fragile equipment to these filming locations safely requires expertise that Packair Airfreight Inc. of Los Angeles, CA, has over 30 years doing successfully.

“In our business, it needs to be there yesterday,” said Senior Operations Manager, Steve Park. “We’re known for getting the cargo out the same day. If something needs to fly out on short notice on a charter, we can do it. We arrange hand-carries as needed, depending on the importance and the client’s security requirements of the item, and have documents ready. We deliver on time.”

Packair ships to locations within the US, to Europe, the Americas, Asia, Australia, Africa, and the Middle East – literally all over the world. They coordinate with the destination agent to arrange local transportation of the items. “The agents work in our niche market and their local knowledge is essential to getting shipments delivered right,” Mr. Park said. Packair uses the Magaya Cargo System and Magaya OnTheGo remote access to ship the cargo and keep on top of any last minute needs during filming.

Special Handling for Film and Filming Equipment

Motion pictures are shot using raw film stock. Most film strips are made of 8-, 16-, or 35-mm polyester with an emulsion layer applied to it. The film is wrapped around a spool and placed inside a can for storage and protection from light, dirt, humidity, and degradation.

When a can of film is sent from the US to a filming location, the film is used on the set where the actors and director shoot scenes; then the film is sent back to the US after each day’s shoot. Both shipments require the film be put on a plane and sent through the airport, like all cargo; however, the film cannot be X-rayed.

Packair’s Export Manager, Luis M. Arroyo explained, “X-raying film would destroy it.” To ensure proper handling and avoid the loss of filming done by a film crew, Packair makes advanced arrangements with the carrier. Alternative cargo screening methods include Explosives Trace Detection (ETD), a method often used at airports to check for traces of explosives. Hand searches are another method used at airports, but exposure to light will ruin the film so a darkroom or other covered method must be used.

In addition to shipping film, Packair also ships props to movie sets. Props can be as large as a vehicle or as small as a fake pistol. Theatrical weapons include guns, swords, knives, or other items depending on the type of film being made. For example, an historical film may require sabers or muskets while actors in a present-day police drama in New York City need current models of handguns. Some guns are made of rubber if the scene does not require the gun be fired, or blanks can be used to simulate firing. The shipment requirements for the weapons are stringent. These and other props require expert packaging and handling.

Certified

To improve the handling and speed up the processing of all these items, Packair’s 10,000 square-foot warehouse is a Certified Cargo Screening Facility (CCSF). According to the Certified Cargo Screening Program (CCSP), all cargo that is shipped on passenger aircraft must be screened, item by item, before it is



consolidated. To facilitate the movement of the cargo, it can be screened at a certified location before it is sent to the air carrier. Sales and Customer Service Representative Kathleen Tipton explained that Packair participated in the first phase of the screening program rollout and has met all the certification requirements such as specialized training for employees, ensuring the security of the facility and of the items while they are in the warehouse and during transit.

To accommodate the reporting requirements of the US Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Packair added custom fields to their Warehouse Receipt in their Magaya software to report all the data gathered about the screened cargo.

“We can now generate reports to comply with the CCSP reporting requirements,” Mr. Park said. They are required to keep records of how much cargo they screen and maintain chain of custody standards for screened cargo. They can print the report for the TSA when requested or during spot checks. “It’s very good to have this capability in our Magaya software. We did not have to hire a programmer to configure a system, so it was an easy process to implement,” said Mr. Park.

The Correct Documentation

Since items such as the cameras and lighting equipment will return to the US, they are shipped as Temporary Exports. Packair files a carnet document or certificate of registration as needed to facilitate the shipment and re-entry of the items. An ATA Carnet form is an international customs document that permits duty-free and tax-free temporary import of goods for up to one year. Temporary Exports are not charged Customs duties. “We know which items

can be shipped under a carnet and save our customers costly duties,” Mr. Park said. They send a pre-alert of the shipment to the customer and follow up with phone calls.

In addition to using the trade documents that are included in Magaya software, Luis M. Arroyo, the Exports Manager, and his export department staff of six use all the accounting features in the Magaya Cargo System, including billing, invoices, accounts receivable, accounts payable, and banking features. “We liquidate in Magaya and do all our billing straight from Magaya,” Mr. Arroyo said. “We also run sales reports, aging reports, bank account balance, and other accounting reports that we give to the CPA.”

“Magaya is an all-inclusive package,” Mr. Arroyo said. “I don’t have to have a separate software program for accounting and another one for imports and exports. With Magaya, you have one software program and that’s all you need.”

On The Go

Sometimes a staff member will travel to the filming location to manage the shipments on location. When they log into Magaya OnTheGo, they can see their database just as if they were sitting in their office in Los Angeles.

They generate shipments and print air waybills, pull reports and other features while on site at a film shoot. “It’s a lot easier to have Magaya OnTheGo because all my contact information is there such as names and phone numbers,” Mr. Arroyo said.

“Sometimes there are last-minute items that need to be shipped in,” Mr. Park said. “Arrangements we made may need to be changed. If we had three LD-7 air freight containers booked, but then more items need to be shipped, we can change the shipment and make new documentation right there on site using Magaya

OnTheGo on a laptop, and the documents are very professional. Some freight forwarders still use typewriters. In fact, we used to carry a typewriter to the locations and type the documents. We now can generate delivery orders and pickup orders in Magaya right there on site instead of having to call the office, fax documents or scan and send them back and forth."

"That's what makes us stand out," Mr. Arroyo said. "Customers can call us any time, and with Magaya OnTheGo, we can access information from anywhere. If there is an issue, we just jump on the computer and fix it."

Packair was using an old export program that was written in the 1980's. When they were using that program, they had to have a separate accounting program also. The president of Packair, Sussan Sharifian, found Magaya and started using it in 2005.

In Conclusion

"Packair is considering opening an office in Puerto Rico, and using Magaya OnTheGo will help us work there without buying expensive hardware or software," Mr. Park said.

In addition to providing services for the film industry, Packair also ships a wide variety of general freight, including items for the government, perishables, and biomed, and plus they are certified to handle hazardous materials. Packair has experience handling temperature-sensitive items and fragile electronics. They also offer special crating services and can palletize and shrink wrap cargo. They have built crates for statues as small as the Oscar or as large as a Velociraptor for a dinosaur movie.

Many of Packair's new clients learn about them by word of mouth. "This business is a small world," Mr. Park said. "We've had customers tell other people to call us, saying, 'Call Luis at Packair – We went to Jamaica and he got all our equipment there; the dailies were put on DVD and sent back to the producers so they could see what we shot that day.' That personal touch makes the difference."

