



PLAYBOOK

High Value Shipping

**How to Protect, Monitor,
and Optimize Your Most
Expensive Shipments**

Playbook

Why High-Value Shipping Demands a Different Strategy

Not all parcels are created equal. For companies moving pharmaceuticals, medical devices, aerospace components, semiconductors, luxury goods, or other high-value items, every shipment carries more than product—it carries revenue, brand reputation, and even regulatory compliance.

The risks are higher, the variables more complex, and the cost of mistakes far greater. Yet many shippers still rely on default carrier policies that offer limited protection, creating unnecessary exposure to losses, damage, or unexpected surcharges.

This playbook provides a framework for shipping smarter when the value of the goods in transit is too high to leave to chance. The guidance here is grounded in LJM's 25 years of expertise, billions of audited parcels, and ongoing analysis of carrier policies.

Step 1: Understand Insurance vs. Declared Value

Carrier policies differ when it comes to liability coverage—but across the board, it's critical to understand the difference between declared value and true insurance.

Declared value increases the carrier's **maximum liability** for loss or damage; it does **not** guarantee reimbursement for the full value of the goods. Coverage can also be denied based on packaging, service type, or compliance with carrier rules.

Outlined below are key elements of leading carrier policies. However, every shipping profile is unique—an expert review of your contract is essential to ensure your coverage aligns with your company's risk tolerance and operational needs.

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Step 1: Understand Insurance vs. Declared Value

FedEx Declared Value Policy Highlights

- **Declared value ≠ insurance:** It only raises FedEx’s maximum liability if a shipment is lost or damaged.
- **Automatic coverage:** Up to \$100 in liability per shipment.
- **Signature requirement:** Shipments declared at \$500+ automatically include Direct Signature Required.
- **Packaging disclaimer:**
“The packaging you choose and how you pack your shipment are critical factors when it comes to determining liability. If a shipment is improperly packaged and/or packed and is subsequently damaged, FedEx will not be deemed at fault.”
- **Maximum declared value** applies to business shippers unless an exemption applies:

FedEx Service	Maximum Declared Value
FedEx First Overnight, FedEx Priority Overnight, FedEx Standard Overnight, FedEx 2Day A.M., FedEx 2Day, or FedEx Express Saver, FedEx Ground, FedEx Home Delivery	\$50,000
FedEx SameDay	\$2,000

- **Exemptions for the Declared Value Advantage Program** or jewelry and precious metals:
 - Up to \$100,000 domestic and \$25,000 international coverage (select destinations).
 - Must ship jewelry 2–3 times per week to qualify.

Sources: FedEx.com, [2025 FedEx Service Guide](#)

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Step 1: Understand Insurance vs. Declared Value

UPS Declared Value Policy Highlights

- **Automatic coverage:** UPS automatically covers up to **\$100** in liability per shipment.
- **High-Value Shipment Summary:** For declared values above **\$1,000**, shippers must generate a High Value Shipment Summary and obtain the driver's signature at pickup. Without this, UPS limits recovery to **\$1,000**, even if a higher value was declared.
- **Maximum declared value:**
 - Up to **\$50,000** per package or **\$100,000** per pallet (depending on service).
 - Some UPS Next Day Air shipments qualify for **"Enhanced Maximum Declared Value"** of up to **\$70,000**.
- **Exemptions:** Specific limits and conditions apply depending on commodity, destination, and service level. For more information see page 33 of the UPS 2025 Tariff/Terms and Conditions of Service – United States.
- **Jewelry shipments:** See ups.com/jewelry for guidelines and restrictions.
- **Packaging disclaimer:** Like FedEx, UPS limits liability if packaging does not meet its published standards.



Key Takeaway: Declaring value is **not** the same as purchasing insurance—it only raises a carrier's liability ceiling. Both FedEx and UPS apply numerous conditions that can void reimbursement, from inadequate packaging to missing documentation. Declared value also does not cover service failures like late delivery.

For high-value shipments, it's essential to:

- Validate packaging standards to preserve eligibility.
- Document every hand-off and signature.
- Consider supplemental insurance or third-party coverage for true protection.

Sources: 2025 UPS® Rate and Service Guide, 2025 UPS® Tariff/Terms & Conditions of Service

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Step 2: Package Like It Matters (Because It Does)

High-value shipments face elevated risk—from targeted theft to damage caused by handling or transit conditions. Proper packaging not only protects the shipment itself but also preserves eligibility for carrier liability coverage in the event of loss or damage.

Packaging Best Practices for High-Value Shipments

- **Double-box when possible:** Adds impact protection and deters tampering.
- **Use clear tape:** Makes any interference or resealing attempts immediately visible.
- **Avoid descriptive labels:** Never advertise contents such as “jewelry,” “electronics,” or “pharmaceuticals” on the outer carton.
- **Document the process:** Record photos or video of packing to support claims or investigations.
- **Prevent internal movement:** Use sufficient cushioning and secure all items so contents can’t shift in transit.



Even when all carrier packaging standards are met, extreme weather or unforeseen events can still result in disputes or denied claims. For that reason, most shippers handling high-value parcels should view **supplemental insurance** as an essential safeguard—not an optional add-on.



Key Takeaway: Packaging is your first and strongest line of defense. It protects both your product and your ability to recover losses. Carriers regularly deny claims that fall short of their published packaging requirements, so meticulous preparation and documentation are critical to maintaining coverage and ensuring peace of mind.

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Step 3: Explore Insurance Options Beyond Declared Value

Declared value coverage is limited—it caps carrier liability but doesn't function as true insurance. For high-value shippers, comparing **carrier-affiliated** programs and **third-party** insurance is essential to find coverage that aligns with risk exposure.

- **Carrier-Affiliated Options**

- **UPS: InsureShield® Shipping Protection**

Functions as true insurance rather than extended liability. Covers a broader range of risks—including theft, mishandling, and damage—and can apply across multiple carriers.

- **FedEx: Declared Value Only**

FedEx does **not** sell traditional insurance. Declared value remains a liability ceiling, and coverage is strictly conditional on compliance with packaging and service requirements.

- **USPS: Registered Mail**

Offers insurance above **\$5,000** and the highest security level within USPS. However, it involves slower delivery and tighter handling controls.

- **Third-Party Insurance:** For shipments that exceed carrier caps or require broader protection, third-party insurers often provide the best value and flexibility. These policies typically:

- Cover higher declared values (often well above **\$50,000**).
 - Protect against common carrier exclusions (e.g., “improper packaging” or theft without direct evidence).
 - Offer per-shipment or continuous (all-parcel) coverage options.



Key Takeaway: True insurance comes either through **third-party** policies or select **carrier-affiliated** products like UPS InsureShield®. For shipments over **\$50,000**, or for sensitive categories such as jewelry, semiconductors, or pharmaceuticals, external coverage is often the only reliable safeguard against catastrophic loss.

Sources: [FedEx.com](https://www.fedex.com), [2025 FedEx Service Guide](https://www.fedex.com/en-us/serviceguides/2025), [USPS.com](https://www.usps.com), [2025 UPS® Rate and Service Guide](https://www.usps.com/rates)

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Step 4: Monitor Every Step

Visibility is non-negotiable when shipping high-value parcels. Real-time tracking and layered monitoring not only reduce theft and loss risk—they also provide the documentation carriers require for claim resolution.

Visibility and Monitoring Best Practices

1. Real-Time Tracking:

All major carriers (FedEx, UPS, DHL, USPS) offer real-time visibility tools. Certain premium programs—such as FedEx Advanced Tracking—add proactive alerts and more granular milestone updates.

2. Third-Party Monitoring:

GPS-enabled trackers and IoT sensors provide an independent layer of security controlled by the shipper. These devices can monitor location, temperature, humidity, and tampering—offering accountability beyond carrier-provided tracking.

3. Signature Confirmation:

Automatically required for FedEx shipments declared at \$500+, and strongly recommended for UPS shipments over \$1,000 declared value.

4. Maintain an Audit Trail:

Retain all shipping labels, hand-off scans, communications, and signatures. Comprehensive documentation is often the deciding factor in successful claim recovery.



Key Takeaway: End-to-end visibility turns data into defense. Use multi-layer tracking, signature verification, and meticulous record-keeping to safeguard high-value shipments—and to strengthen your position if a dispute or loss occurs. Partnering with an expert whose platform delivers comprehensive, real-time visibility in one place is the smartest way to protect every high-value shipment.

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Step 5: Factor in Surcharges and Specialty Fees

High-value shipping comes with high-stakes costs—and “declared value” doesn’t exempt you from additional fees. Carriers impose surcharges that can quietly add thousands of dollars to your invoice if not carefully managed.

- **Declared Value Fees**

- **FedEx:**

Charges a declared value fee of **\$4.50** for parcels valued between **\$100.01–\$300**, and **\$1.50 per \$100** of declared value for shipments exceeding **\$300**.

- **UPS:**

Charges a flat fee of **\$4.80** for declared values between **\$100.01** and **\$300**, and **\$1.60 per \$100** for values exceeding **\$300**.

- **Size and Packaging Fees**

- **Oversize and Over-Max:**

Large or irregular high-value parcels that exceed published limits are subject to steep surcharges from both FedEx and UPS.

- **Additional Handling:**

Fees apply based on size, weight, or packaging type—particularly for non-standard dimensions, cylindrical containers, or non-corrugated materials.

- **Cold Chain and Specialty Handling:** Pharmaceutical and biotech shipments must meet strict **FDA**, **IATA**, and **DOT** regulations for packaging and temperature control. Carriers apply specialized surcharges for thermal protection, dry ice, and controlled-environment transport.



Key Takeaway: Surcharges for high-value shipments are inevitable—but they are also predictable with the right data and oversight. Reviewing your carrier agreements and surcharge triggers with an expert can prevent avoidable costs and protect your profit margins.

Sources: [FedEx.com](https://www.fedex.com), [2025 FedEx Service Guide](https://www.fedex.com/ship/2025/FedEx_Service_Guide.pdf), [USPS.com](https://www.usps.com), [2025 UPS® Rate and Service Guide](https://www.usps.com/ship/2025/UPS%20Rate%20and%20Service%20Guide.pdf)

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Step 6: Review Your Carrier Options

No single carrier is best for every high-value shipment. Each has distinct strengths, cost structures, and risk profiles—making it essential to match carrier selection to your product type, destination, and insurance needs.

Carrier Comparison Snapshot

- **FedEx:**

Offers a specialized Declared Value Advantage program for jewelry and precious metals, with coverage up to **\$100,000** domestically and **\$25,000** internationally. Ideal for shippers who qualify based on frequency and commodity type.

- **UPS:**

As of 2025, UPS **declared value fees are higher** than FedEx on a per-dollar basis. However, it does provide the InsureShield® Shipping Protection program for broader, true-insurance coverage across carriers.

- **DHL:**

Recognized for excellence in **international and regulated shipments**, particularly in pharmaceutical and medical device sectors. Strict adherence to **IATA** and **TSA compliance** requirements is mandatory.

- **USPS:**

For smaller high-value shipments under **\$5,000**, Registered Mail can be a cost-effective alternative, offering strong security though at the expense of speed and flexibility.

Selecting the Right Carrier Strategy

The optimal approach depends on your specific shipping profile—product value, destination mix, service level, and tolerance for risk. Most executives wouldn't sign a major business contract without legal review; the same principle applies here. Before committing to carrier agreements or declared value programs, it's wise to have experts audit your terms to ensure coverage and cost alignment.



Key Takeaway: Each carrier offers a different balance of cost, protection, and control. Choosing the right mix—and validating the fine print—can protect both your assets and your margins. Advisory review from parcel experts ensures your carrier partnerships reflect your actual risk and business priorities.

Playbook Conclusion

Shipping high-value items isn't just about moving products—it's about protecting profitability, customer trust, and in many cases, regulatory compliance. Carriers offer a range of options for declared value and insurance, but understanding the fine print and ensuring the right safeguards are in place ultimately falls on the shipper.

LJM's **Executive Shipping Advisory** helps companies shipping high-value goods design strategies that minimize risk, reduce unnecessary cost, and protect both assets and brand reputation. Our **Parcel Intelligence Platform**™ ensures the highest level of visibility, protecting both assets and brand reputation.

[Request a consultation](#) with LJM to audit your high-value shipping practices to ensure your strategy reflects the value of the products you ship.

Next Step