

Charleston Freight Station:

Fast, Flexible Freight Specialists

BY BETSY HARTER

FOR NEARLY 20 YEARS, DAVID BLAIR AND HIS TEAM at Charleston Freight Station (CFS) have provided container freight station services for the Port of Charleston's customers. A lot has changed in that time, but one thing remains constant: a strong commitment to superior service, from source to destination.

A U.S. Customs bonded warehouse, CFS offers a laundry list of import / export services to its customers, including loose cargo transfer and breakdown, ocean import cargo, full container and LCL container services, trailer and intermodal conveyance, cargo segregation, heavy forklift service, crate disposal and fumigation.

But if you ask Blair what his specialty is, he has just one word: speed.

“Our business is not just about taking cargo out and putting it back.”
 — David Blair,
 Charleston Freight Station
 owner

“We can move 45,000 pounds before they even fax the paperwork to us,” he said. “It’s all about rapid movement of cargo, fast freight relocation. It’s that simple.”

Yet, all that goes on behind the scenes at CFS is not simple at all. The CFS team works around the clock to accommodate customers’ unique requests and needs.

“Our business is not just about taking cargo out and putting it back,” Blair said. “Our employees are specialists who act almost as freight psychiatrists, figuring out

how the cargo can get where it’s going with the fewest interruptions. We can look into the future and anticipate what our customers will need.”

Although the company’s official hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Blair and his team work 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“Our gates are open any time, with advance notice,” Blair said. “We don’t stop, because the steamship industry doesn’t stop. We are open when our customers are open.”

The convenient hours accommodate many shippers, whose trucks often arrive in Charleston during the wee hours of the morning.

In addition to its commercial services, CFS also has been the U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s designated Central Examination Station (CES) in the Port of Charleston since 1996.

“The CES designation means that we receive and handle cargo that requires examination prior to U.S. Customs release,” Blair explained.

The CFS facility receives, handles and examines cargo that contains imported and exported products. CFS has a U.S. Customs and Border Protection office on site that is staffed five days a week by inspectors, who perform all types of Customs examinations, while an automated CES program tracks exams and containers.

Since Blair founded CFS on Daniel Island 19 years ago, the company has experienced many changes. On the infrastructure side, CFS has un-

dergone several expansions to accommodate a growing customer base. Now, the 5.5-acre property includes a 50,000-square-foot warehouse with 22 loading positions, as well as a 3-acre paved parking yard, secured with barbed wire, a gate and a 24-hour guard.

The company is in the process of increasing its ability to handle climate-controlled cargo. By the end of the year, it will triple the number of reefer plugs on the premises from 12 to 36 receptacles.

“We like to be ready for whatever comes our way, so we are adding more reefer plugs in anticipation of easily handling large companies that need to let climate-controlled cargo sit for a few days before it goes to the port,” Blair said.

CFS already handles several types of cargo that require reefer plugs, including pharmaceuticals, apples, pears, peaches and asparagus. These products must be held at constant controlled temperatures.

“We continuously monitor the set and run temperatures for our customers, and we are dedicated to ensuring top-notch quality and safety for temperature-sensitive cargo, whether it is on premises for several hours, or several days.”

In addition to facility upgrades, CFS also changed some of its business practices to become more environmentally sound. For example, CFS has lowered its own emissions by using only low sulfur diesel fuel in its equipment, and Blair plans to move to electric alternatives as time and cost permit.

“We choose trucking partners such as Bulldog Express, who have shown a similar commitment to green practices,” Blair said. “We and our partners are conscious of cleaning up the environment; we are concerned about emissions and are doing something about it.”

At 59, Blair has no plans to slow down, especially after a productive month like this one, which gleaned three new customers.

He attributes recent success to a re-energized port community, thanks to new leadership by SCSPA President and CEO Jim Newsome.

“Jimmy Newsome is 100 percent upbeat and encouraging and he is building everyone’s confidence back up about the Port of Charleston,” Blair said.





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