

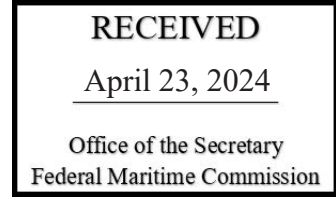


BEFORE THE  
FEDERAL MARITIME COMMISSION

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FMC DOCKET NO. 24-18

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ACCESS ONE TRANSPORT, INC.  
Complainant,

v.

CMA CGM S.A.  
Respondent.

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**VERIFIED COMPLAINT**

Comes now, Complainant Access One Transport, Inc. (“Complainant” or “ACCESS ONE”), by its undersigned attorneys, and files this verified complaint against Respondent, CMA CGM S.A. (“Respondent” or “CMA”) alleging violations of the Shipping Act of 1984, as amended, 46 U.S.C. §40101, et. seq. (the “Act”) as follows:

**I. THE COMPLAINANT**

1. Complainant, Access One Transport, Inc. is a California corporation that is operating as a licensed motor carrier with a place of business at 1233 W. Gardena Blvd., Suite 100, Gardena California 90247. Complainant may be contacted through counsel, Stephen M. Uthoff at [suthoff@uthofflaw.com](mailto:suthoff@uthofflaw.com).

## **II. THE RESPONDENT**

2. Respondent, CMA, on information and belief, is a corporation organized under laws of France. CMA's corporate headquarters, on information and belief, is located at Tour CMA CGM Boulevard Jacques Saade 4, Quai D'Arenc, Marseille, France 13002.

3. CMA does business in the United States through, *inter alia*, its agent, CMA CGM (America) LLC. ("CMA America"), with its principal place of business at 1 CMA CGM Way, Norfolk, Virginia 23502. CMA America is also qualified to do business in the state of California with an office at 3501 Jamboree Road Suite 300, Newport Beach, California 92660. At all times relevant CMA was responsible for the actions of CMA America in relation to the allegations of this complaint.

4. At all times pertinent to this complaint, CMA was and is an ocean common carrier as defined by the act at 46 USC §§40102(7) and (18) and is identified as Federal Maritime Commission (the "Commission") organization number 016541.

5. CMA has published a customer service email address related to detention and demurrage as [usa.clientsolutions@usa.cma-cgm.com](mailto:usa.clientsolutions@usa.cma-cgm.com)

## **III. JURISDICTION AND LEGAL AUTHORITY**

6. The Commission has subject matter jurisdiction over this complaint pursuant to the Act, 46 USC §40101 *et. seq.*

7. The Commission has personal jurisdiction over CMA as an ocean common carrier as contemplated by the Act as defined in 46 USC §§40102(7) and (18).

8. This complaint seeks reparations, equitable and other relief for alleged violations of 46 USC §41102(c) by Respondent's failure to establish, observe, and enforce just and reasonable practices related to receiving, handling, storing and delivering property. Complainant

also alleges certain conduct by Respondent to be an unreasonable preference or practice per 46 U.S.C. §41104(a)(3) and (8) and are independent violations of the Act.

#### **IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

9. ACCESS ONE is a motor carrier with operations at Gardena, California.

10. As part of its operations, ACCESS ONE will dray full and empty containers to and from various terminals located in the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

11. As part of its drayage operations, ACCESS ONE is routinely required to pick up full imported ocean containers from and return empty containers to CMA designated terminal(s). CMA uses several terminals in the Long Beach/Los Angeles port complex to handle its cargo and empties.

12. ACCESS ONE and CMA are parties to the Uniform Intermodal Interchange and Facilities Access Agreement (“UIIA”). CMA participates in the UIIA through CGM America.<sup>1</sup>

13. Under the UIIA addendum applicable to CMA, CMA allows four business days free time to return empty containers after full loads are pulled from CMA’s terminals. Thereafter, per the CMA Addendum to the UIIA, CMA charges various rates per day detention for each day the empty container is not returned to CMA beyond the free time allowed depending on the size and configuration of the empty container.

14. CMA may have further agreements directly with shippers, consignees, beneficial cargo owners or other parties which extend the amount of free time allowed or that may change the amount of detention charged on a daily basis. ACCESS ONE may benefit from such agreements.

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<sup>1</sup> “Ocean carrier practices, whether incorporated in the UIIA, or not, are within the Commission's purview under section 41102(c).” Final Rule, 85 FR at 29649

15. The containers picked up from CMA by ACCESS ONE are placed on chassis owned or controlled by third parties and ACCESS ONE is charged a daily rate for their use.

16. In relation to the complaint herein, from on or about April 2021 through June 2022, ACCESS ONE in its ordinary course of business, pulled full containers from CMA designated terminals for delivery to its customers. After its customers had unloaded the cargo therein, ACCESS ONE in the regular course would attempt to return the empty containers to CMA within the free time allowed.

17. CMA, would provide available location(s) for return of the empty containers on a routine basis via a web link.

18. The notifications would identify the specific terminal, the type of equipment which may be returned, if the terminal had availability and if other restrictions were imposed, such as a “dual” transaction. Not all dates had general availability for empty returns.

19. A dual transaction requires the motor carrier to pick up a full container at the same time it dropped off an empty container. If a motor carrier does not have a corresponding full pick up at the terminal it may not drop off the empty.

20. Where CMA designated an empty return location, before an empty container could be returned, the motor carrier must then make an appointment with the designated terminal. ACCESS ONE for a time used a third party service and also directly used terminal resources to determine if appointments were available at the designated CMA terminals. ACCESS ONE often discovered there were no actual appointments available to return empty containers to CMA terminals even when CMA had designated a terminal for returns.

21. Further, on the rare occasion when availability was shown and appointments were available, there were limits as to how many empties could be returned in a given day.

22. In the regular course of business, ACCESS ONE would also contact the terminals directly in an attempt to secure appointments to return empty containers without result. When ACCESS ONE attempted to secure appointments to return the empty containers, ACCESS ONE would often be notified that all appointments had been filled or that the terminal would not accept empty containers, contrary to CMA's designation.

23. Because ACCESS ONE was required to hold onto empty containers and their corresponding chassis for multiple days, storage was incurred, and chassis charges were assessed. Also because containers could not be directly returned to CMA, additional stop off and re-delivery charges were assessed.

24. Despite its best efforts to return empty containers because of the lack of available appointments, dual transactions or the volume of empty containers at its facility caused by CMA's past actions, it may have been impractical to return all empty containers on hand at once even if some limited appointments were available.

25. CMA has charged detention in an unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious manner. To illustrate: 1) CMA would issue daily empty return availability; 2) if any locations were identified for empty returns CMA charged detention if the empty container was out beyond free time; 3) ACCESS ONE used its best efforts to determine if appointments were actually available for the returns; 4) if appointments were available ACCESS ONE would return empties to the extent it reasonably could; 5) CMA charged ACCESS ONE detention for any empty container not returned during freetime regardless of the lack of any appointments to do so. Thus, CMA would still charge daily detention per container even if the empty, in reality, could not be returned through the actions of CMA or its designated terminals.

26. Working diligently with the availability allowed by CMA, ACCESS ONE returned the empties it had on hand over time, but nevertheless received substantial detention invoices from CMA which have been disputed.

27. In addition to the detention invoices from CMA, ACCESS ONE has received invoices from the third party chassis providers and has also accrued storage, stop off and re-delivery charges related to the CMA empties. In some instances, CMA ultimately waived detention charges on some containers, but nevertheless ACCESS ONE still incurred such damages.

28. ACCESS ONE contends that it would have been able to return containers to CMA during free time but for CMA and its terminal's actions.

29. Instead of adequately allowing for opportunities to return empty containers, CMA involuntarily forced ACCESS ONE to act as a storage facility for CMA empty containers without compensation. Such actions not only should have incurred storage and related charges for the containers for CMA's account, it also caused ACCESS ONE to incur and assess storage and chassis charges to its customers, and interfered with ACCESS ONE's operations and its relationship with its customers.

30. Further as a result of the disputed detention ACCESS ONE is subject to being "shut out" from access to CMA shipments.

**V. CAUSATION - VIOLATIONS OF THE SHIPPING ACT**  
**AND INJURY TO COMPLAINANT**

31. In reference to the aforementioned pled facts and recitals Complainant further alleges the following violations of the Act.

32. CMA is a common carrier by water as defined by the Act.

33. The Act at 46 USC §41102(c) provides: “**(c) Practices in handling property.** A common carrier, marine terminal operator, or ocean transportation intermediary may not fail to establish, observe, and enforce just and reasonable regulations and practices relating to or connected with receiving, handling, storing, or delivering property.”

34. The return of empty containers to a common carrier relates to or is connected with the receiving, handling, storing, or delivering property, as contemplated by the Act (see 46 C.F.R. §545.5(c)(2)(ii)). An ocean carrier such as CMA is responsible for having adequate terminal facilities for its operations, including empty returns, see 85 FR 29638, 29650.

35. The Commission has adopted interpretive rule at 46 C.F.R. §545.5 to help identify unreasonable practices as contemplated by 46 U.S.C. §41102(c). It provides in its relevant part:

“(c) Incentive principle—

(1) General. In assessing the reasonableness of demurrage and detention practices and regulations, the Commission will consider the extent to which demurrage and detention are serving their intended primary purposes as financial incentives to promote freight fluidity.

(2) Particular applications of incentive principle—...

(ii) Empty container return. Absent extenuating circumstances, practices and regulations that provide for imposition of detention when it does not serve its incentivizing purposes, such as when empty containers cannot be returned, are likely to be found unreasonable.

(d) Demurrage and detention policies. The Commission may consider in the reasonableness analysis the existence, accessibility, content, and clarity of policies implementing demurrage and detention practices and regulations, including dispute resolution policies and practices and regulations regarding demurrage and detention billing. In assessing dispute resolution policies, the Commission may further consider the extent to which they contain information about points of contact, timeframes, and corroboration requirements. ...

(f) Non-Preclusion. Nothing in this rule precludes the Commission from considering factors, arguments, and evidence in addition to those specifically listed in this rule.”

36. The above factual recitals establish that CMA's practices have impacted freight fluidity and CMA's unreasonable practices and policies have and continue to give rise to the imposition of detention charges and related damages incurred by ACCESS ONE when empty containers cannot be returned. Examples include:

a. Where dual transactions are required to return an empty container. ACCESS ONE submits this is an unreasonable practice regardless if ACCESS ONE can take advantage of such appointments<sup>2</sup>. In the alternative, if a dual transaction was not available to ACCESS ONE, no detention should be charged. Further requiring a dual transaction to return an empty without penalty of detention, in addition to violating 46 U.S.C. §41102(c), constitutes an unreasonable preference or practice per 46 U.S.C. §41104(a)(3) and (8) and thus is an independent violation of the Act.

b. Where CMA designates a terminal for return of empties but the terminal itself has no appointments (or an inadequate number of appointments) to allow a return of an empty.

c. CMA contributed to operational difficulties for ACCESS ONE requiring ACCESS ONE to store containers at its facility. Thereafter if empty return appointments are available, there was no consideration if operationally the empty can be returned, given the number of empties being stored and power available for its reasonable return. The number of containers refused by CMA or its agent terminals that had to be stored at ACCESS ONE or its designated

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<sup>2</sup> As noted by the Commission at 85 FR 29638, 29655 "The Commission is particularly concerned about the reasonableness of dual move requirements, or more specifically, an ocean carrier imposing detention when a trucker's inability to return a container within free time is due to it not being able to satisfy a dual move requirement."



locations (without compensation) should be taken into account when determining the ability to return only a limited number of containers at any one time.

d. CMA's refusal to accept empties impacted ongoing cargo fluidity.

e. Any potential shutout of ACCESS ONE resulting from the improper detention invoices.

37. CMA's actions also caused additional injury to ACCESS ONE including;

1) CMA created operational difficulties for ACCESS ONE whereby it is required to maintain CMA empties on chassis for unreasonable amounts of time in its yard causing further charges and damages; 2) ACCESS ONE has been forced to invoice its own customers for or otherwise accrue additional charges; 3) generally interfering with the efficient operations of ACCESS ONE, including harming the relationship with ACCESS ONE and its customers and requiring ACCESS ONE to act as an involuntary, uncompensated storage yard for CMA equipment; 4) any possible threat to "shut out" ACCESS ONE's ability to retrieve CMA shipments for ACCESS ONE's customers.

38. The above recitals support an award of reparations under 46 USC §41102(c) as further interpreted by 46 C.F.R. §§545.4, 545.5 and also independently under 46 U.S.C. §41104(a)(3) and (8).

## **VI. DAMAGES**

39. CMA's violations of the Act have caused the following damages to Complainant.

a. detention charges assessed against ACCESS ONE that have not been previously waived by CMA in the minimum amount of \$58,400.00; and

b. Chassis charges associated with the storage of CMA's empty containers in the minimum amount of \$7,860.00; and

- c. Storage costs for of CMA's empty containers in the minimum amount of \$8,685.00; and
- d. Stop off charges in the minimum amount of \$1,750.00; and
- e. Re-delivery charges in the minimum amount of \$1,120.00; and
- f. damages associated with the interference of existing contracts between ACCESS ONE and its customers according to proof; and
- g. damages associated with the inability to accept certain work because of the lack of space and/or equipment caused by the empty CMA containers according to proof; and
- h. damages associated with the disruption of the operations of ACCESS ONE as a result of CMA's refusal to accept its empty containers according to proof; and
- i. damages related to any potential "shut out" of ACCESS ONE from its ability to pick up CMA shipments for ACCESS ONE's customers according to proof.

40. In addition to the damages suffered by ACCESS ONE, based upon information and belief, the violations committed by CMA have also affected similarly situated motor carriers and members of the public.

41. The above are minimum amounts of damages suffered. Investigation and discovery are continuing as to all damages. ACCESS ONE reserves the right to provide proof of all damages for the purposes of reparations pursuant to 46 C.F.R. §§502.251 et. seq.

#### **VII. REQUEST FOR RELIEF**

42. WHEREFORE ACCESS ONE requests entry of an order against Respondent for the following: ACCESS ONE requests that CMA be required to answer the charges made in this complaint; that after hearing or other summary determination; the Commission order respondent to:

a. Cease and desist from violating the Act including but not limited to assessing unlawful detention and any shut out of ACCESS ONE; and

b. to put in place lawful and reasonable practices to avoid continuing and future violations of the Act.; and

c. Payment of reparations and damages for the unlawful conduct described herein, in amounts according to proof, in the minimum amounts identified above for, but not limited to the following;

i. for reimbursement of detention invoices paid or cancellation of open detention invoices; and

ii. For chassis related fees; and

iii. For container storage; and

iv. For stop off charges; and

v. For re-delivery charges; and

vi. For damages associated with the interference with ACCESS ONE's current and prospective contracts; and

vii. For disruption of ACCESS ONE's operations, including any shut out, resulting from Respondent's unlawful conduct; and

viii. For interest on the amounts awarded; and

d. For attorney's fees and costs pursuant to 46 USC §41305, 46 C.F.R. §502.254 or as otherwise recoverable; and

e. For payment of any other sums the Commission deems appropriate; and

f. For such other relief as the Commission deems just and proper, including injunctive relief, temporary or permanent.

**VII. REQUEST FOR ORAL HEARING**

43. Complainant requests a hearing on this matter and further requests that the hearing be conducted at the Commission's regional office or other appropriate location in Los Angeles, County California.

Date: April 23, 2024

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen M. Uthoff  
The Uthoff Law Corporation  
111 W. Ocean Blvd., Suite 1960  
Long Beach, California 90802  
t. 562-437-4301  
f. 562-437-4341  
email; [suthoff@uthofflaw.com](mailto:suthoff@uthofflaw.com)  
Attorneys for Complainant,  
Access One Transport, Inc.

**Verification**

I, Nobu Suzuki, president of Access One Transport, Inc. am authorized to make this verification on behalf of Access One Transport, Inc. I hereby declare under penalty of perjury that I have read the contents of this complaint and that the facts stated therein are true based upon my knowledge information and belief, on information as gathered by the employees and agents of ACCESS ONE and based upon information publicly available. I declare that the foregoing is true and correct under the laws of the United States.

Date: 4/23/2024

DocuSigned by:  
*Nobu Suzuki*  
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Nobu Suzuki