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Friday, October 3, 2014

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## IAS billing scheme vows to end tortured history of US chassis provisioning

US DOCKSIDE chassis provider IAS-International Asset Systems feels it has identified and resolved the big billing problem that has troubled forwarders and cargo owners procuring trailers since carriers stopped doing it in recent years.

"The administration and accuracy of billing is the problem," said IAS chief operations officer John Allen in response to questions from the Hong Kong Shipping Gazette.

"When an ocean carrier makes an exception with a customer to absorb the charges for a chassis, the carrier must be able to inform the billing entity of that fact for the specific moves in question," he said.

And this is where carriers fall down, he said, adding that his Oakland-based company has devised a billing system that uses gate activity information, itemising billable moves and identifying who pays for what.

"We make this information available to all billable parties in real time, so the party paying (motor and ocean carriers) gets accurate invoice and complete back-up info. We also have a support team to reconcile billing problems," he said.

Such systems, it is hoped, will spread to bring to an end the tortured history of dockside chassis provision, which carriers abandoned in the US a few years ago, leaving all in state of confusion.

In the US, ocean carriers have traditionally provided chassis at no direct charge to trucking companies or cargo owners. In other countries, truckers own or procure chassis.

Ocean carriers formed "pools" to share the chassis and manage usage of the chassis by the trucking companies in some busy port and inland rail terminal locations.

Several years ago, Maersk said it would end its ownership and free chassis provisioning and in 2012, the company had sold them to leasing companies. Soon other carriers stopped providing chassis.

But this did not mean ocean carriers were no longer responsible for the cost of chassis provisioning. As carriers sold their chassis, the large asset companies took over, apportioning cost according to the terms of each container move.

They would bill the cargo owner, the trucking company or the ocean carrier depending on the specifics of the deal that often lacked clarity. Mistakes were many and dissatisfaction grew.