China–Kazakhstan Logistics Guide

Moving goods or equipment from China to Kazakhstan? The route is well established; delays usually come from paperwork rather than distance. Who declares the goods, how they are classified and whether they need EAEU conformity documents should be settled before the first container leaves the factory.

AUTHOR	LEGAL REVIEW	PUBLISHED	LAST UPDATED
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Key points

- Chinese and Kazakh railways use different track gauges, so rail cargo is transferred at the border stations Dostyk and Altynkol.
- Kazakhstan applies the customs rules of the Eurasian Economic Union, and customs declarations are filed electronically.
- In a sale by a Chinese supplier, the declarant is normally the Kazakhstan buyer — plan an importer of record before shipping.
- Goods subject to EAEU technical regulations need conformity assessment before they can be sold.

The main rail crossings: Dostyk and Altynkol

Rail freight from China enters Kazakhstan mainly through two border stations: Dostyk and Altynkol, the latter near Khorgos. Because the Chinese and Kazakh networks run on different track gauges, cargo and containers are transferred between wagons at these stations.

Next to the Khorgos crossing, the KTZE–Khorgos Gateway dry port operated by KTZ Express, a subsidiary of the national railway, is a key land hub on the China–Kazakhstan border. Capacity and schedules change as infrastructure is expanded, so confirm them with the operator for each shipment.

Customs: one union, one set of rules

Kazakhstan is part of the customs territory of the Eurasian Economic Union. Goods from China are placed under a customs procedure under the Customs Code of the EAEU, together with Kazakhstan's own customs legislation. Customs declaring is carried out in electronic form, by the declarant or by a customs broker acting for them.

Who can declare the goods

When goods are sold by a foreign supplier, the declarant is normally the person of an EAEU member state that is party to the transaction — in practice, the Kazakhstan buyer. A foreign company's representative office or branch may act as declarant only for goods imported for its own internal needs.

If you plan to sell imported goods in Kazakhstan, you therefore need a local importer: your own company or a contracted partner. Decide this before the sales contract with the Chinese supplier is signed.

Classification, value and certification

Duties, restrictions and certification requirements all follow from the goods' classification code, so agree the codes with your broker before shipping. The invoice, contract and packing list must describe the goods consistently, and the declared customs value must be supported by documents.

Products subject to EAEU technical regulations can be placed on the market only after passing the conformity assessment those regulations require. Obtaining certificates or declarations of conformity after the goods arrive means stock waiting at a warehouse.

Planning the timeline

Transit time depends on the route, border transshipment queues, the season and, above all, how complete the documents are. Build the plan backwards from the date the goods must be sold or installed, and include certification, classification and importer set-up as tasks, not afterthoughts.

Checklist before the first shipment

- Importer of record in Kazakhstan identified and registered
- Classification codes agreed with the customs broker
- EAEU conformity documents obtained or planned for the goods
- Contract, invoice and packing list consistent with each other
- Incoterms and the point where risk passes agreed with the supplier
- Route, border crossing and forwarder confirmed
- Warehouse or installation site ready to receive the goods
- Supplier checked before the advance payment

Considering Kazakhstan?
Tell us what you want to build. We will tell you what it actually takes — the steps, the risks, and the realistic timeline — before you commit capital.
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Sources

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