

Handled with care – by people who care

**Euro-Tran**  
**Despatch**

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## TRACKING - TRICK OR TREAT?

Many carriers now offer, with the aid of sophisticated and costly IT, the ability to track your parcel 'online'.

This is carried out with a barcode scanner, not dissimilar to the one seen at your local Tesco checkout. When you book a consignment, be it online, by consignment note, a pad, or with a carrier implant onto a flashdrive or diskette, a **Consignment Number** is issued. This will appear on the label. This label carries all the information required to complete the delivery. A barcode is generated which contains all the information on the label and thus when scanned informs the depot where the parcel goes next.

So, your parcel is collected. It may have a label attached or may have it first attached at the 'collection'/ depot. Either way its highly likely that the first scanning opportunity will be out of the collection depot onto the trunk vehicle en-route to the hub. Many Carriers, this includes ourselves, do not do this, The first scan opportunity in our network is on arrival at the hub. The parcel then travels along a conveyor belt and passes under a scanner which identifies the parcel and knows exactly which postcode its destined for. A tri-dimensional laser then measures the consignment against its weight to establish whether a cube weight should apply. In many cases the item fails to be scanned, The label may be on the wrong face of the parcel, The barcode has been damaged, The barcode is applied around a tube thus distorting its information, many reasons can result in this not happening... it's commonplace.

For exactly the same reasons, Your parcel may not be scanned out of the hub, Indeed the first actual scan may well be a manual scan into the local delivery depot. If at this point the label will not scan, an unreadable barcode discrepancy will be raised. This confirms the receipt of the parcel, albeit with a damaged barcode. At this point you would have possibly the first confirmation of your parcels whereabouts. In theory the parcel would then be scanned onto the delivery vehicle, then scanned upon delivery. The recipient signing the device and his name input, along with the time recorded. A short time after this a POD is available online.

Clearly, The scanning/Tracking option has lots of pitfalls. It sometimes just doesn't work. But it does for the carrier - You see instead of the Carrier taking a telephone call, reference your consignment, its highly likely you are online, trying to ascertain its position yourself... thus saving the Carrier on customer services. It's a win-win situation for the Carrier.

Indeed who is to say that although the parcel is out on the delivery van, the driver runs out of time, has an accident, calls when the factory is at lunch, or for some other reason is unable to deliver. The scanner doesn't tell you this...

In reality, Tracking is possible, but it's not infallible. When it works it's great, When it goes wrong... well, make your own mind up on that one, but don't rely on it... Service is the key. Tracking is just a flowering up of the process!

**We hope you may find these notes helpful.**

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