

Germany - Central Customs Authority
1 April 2020

Measures for Protection and Self-protection of frontline Customs Officers:

Both the German Central Customs Authority and the local customs authorities have set up crisis teams to ensure the overall performance of customs tasks. In order to guarantee personnel availability in the long term, the official tasks of the organizational units, which are in direct contact with those involved (e.g. customs clearance), have been reduced to the necessary core areas. The use of personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks etc. is mandatory for these personnel. In addition, the relevant hygiene measures must be observed. Employees who are not absolutely necessary are put on standby duty. Persons returning from risk areas may not enter the office for 14 days after their return. This applies accordingly to employees who live in the same household as the aforementioned holiday returnees. Employees who belong to the groups of persons who have a higher risk of developing a serious illness (for example with relevant underlying diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, diseases of the respiratory system, liver and kidney as well as cancer) in principle work on a mobile or telework basis. All employees are obliged to check their own status (confirmed infections or officially confirmed ordered and voluntary quarantine) to their superior(s) immediately.

Measures regarding fumigation of containers and parcel consignments:

The German Robert Koch Institute currently estimates an infection with the novel coronavirus via imported goods as unlikely, since contamination would have to have taken place beforehand and the virus would still be active after the long transport route.

https://www.zoll.de/SharedDocs/Fachmeldungen/Aktuelle-Einzelmeldungen/2020/uebergreifend_coronavirus.html?nn=280764#doc368868bodyText1

Measures to fight illicit trade with counterfeited or stolen medical supply goods:

Customs ensures that the quality standards applicable in the EU are observed for commercially imported drugs. Import is only possible with the necessary documents and permits. Despite its efforts to facilitate the smooth movement of goods, the customs administration continues to carry out risk-based controls, with a particular focus on protective equipment (Trotz des Bestrebens, den Warenverkehr reibungslos zu ermöglichen führt die Zollverwaltung weiterhin risikoorientierte Kontrollen durch und hat dabei auch einen besonderen Fokus auf Schutzausrüstungen).

Other COVID related best practice:

* Just like the Federal Chemicals Agency at the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the customs administration has already reacted to the crisis in the disinfectant market with exemptions:

All persons who already hold a permit for the tax-free use of undenatured alcohol for the production of pharmaceuticals according to § 28 in connection with § 27 Para. 1 No. 1 AlkStG, may also use this permit for the production of disinfectants since 20 March 2020. Accordingly, the improper use of undenatured alcohol, which is actually to be seen therein, is temporarily tolerated. Proof of entitlement is the existing permit. Deliveries must be made in accordance with § 35 AlkStV.

More details, please see: https://www.zoll.de/SharedDocs/Fachmeldungen/Aktuelle-Einzelmeldungen/2020/uebergreifend_coronavirus.html

* Concepts are in place to ensure that goods can be cleared even with limited staff deployment. For this reason, companies are now asked to first contact the customs offices by telephone/email for clearance measures and discuss the further procedure. The same applies to private recipients of postal items. If possible, Customs suggests to request clearance from home without personal appearance. Especially in times of the Corona pandemic, Customs suggests to use this mail handling service from home to avoid further social contacts and to prevent the spread of the virus. This way Customs offices in Germany intent to ensure the maintenance of service operations during the Corona crisis.