

## United States of America

### ARTICLE 10: FORMALITIES CONNECTED WITH IMPORTATION, EXPORTATION AND TRANSIT

#### 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements

##### Centers of Excellence and Expertise (United States) U.S. Customs and Border Protection

#### 1. Description of Initiative

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) created ten Centers of Excellence and Expertise (Centers) that are designed to strategically enforce commercial importation laws while also facilitating the flow of legitimate trade. The concept and development of the Centers was a collaborative initiative between CBP and the trade community who promoted the management by account framework and recommended that CBP modernize the approach to trade to better align with the business realities of importers. Primarily, the approach to transaction-by-transaction processing did not incorporate a holistic view of an importer's activities which led to disparate decisions being made on identical activities at different ports of entry.

Since the creation of the Centers, which began in 2011, the *Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015* codified the Centers as permanent organizations and operational structures within CBP. This underscores the important role the Centers play in the economic security of the United States through efficient and effective enforcement actions, trade facilitation endeavors, and increased trade and industry-based knowledge.

The Center mission is to strengthen America's economic competitiveness and security through integrated industry knowledge and expertise, innovative trade processing procedures and trend analysis, global collaboration, and strategic and impactful trade enforcement actions. The Center mission complements CBP's trade mission and is accomplished through the following focused stratagems:

- ✓ Strategically process post-release trade activities within industry sectors on a national basis,
- ✓ Focus on industry-specific efficiencies to facilitate trade, reduce transaction costs, and increase uniformity and consistency,
- ✓ Serve as an industry-focused resource for the public and private sectors, and
- ✓ Assess trade risks on an account and industry-wide basis to increase compliance with import laws, protect the American public and economy, and enhance the effectiveness of enforcement efforts.

The 10 Centers are as follows and are managed out of the corresponding Field Office:

- Agriculture & Prepared Products, Miami Field Office,
- Apparel, Footwear & Textiles, San Francisco Field Office,
- Automotive & Aerospace; Detroit Field Office,
- Base Metals, Chicago Field Office,
- Consumer Products & Mass Merchandising, Atlanta Field Office,
- Electronics, Los Angeles Field Office,
- Industrial & Manufacturing Materials, Buffalo Field Office,
- Machinery, Laredo Field Office,

- Petroleum, Natural Gas & Minerals, Houston Field Office, and
- Pharmaceuticals, Health & Chemicals, New York Field Office.

## **2. Impact of Initiative**

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) processes all trade activities through the 10 Centers that are designed to strategically enforce commercial importation laws while also facilitating the flow of legitimate trade within a specific industry sector. Aligning CBP's trade approach to the industry sets the foundation for understanding business decisions and incorporating that knowledge into the operational execution of effective and focused enforcement efforts. The Centers' unique insight into their industry sectors allows CBP to optimize efforts to protect the U.S. economy and execute the trade mission.

As the Centers continue to increase their industry level expertise, they provide a basis for identifying risk within their industry from a national perspective, with an approach that balances compliance and enforcement at an account level. The Centers have been afforded the regulatory authority for all post-release trade activities nationwide allowing for the capability to centralize and consolidate these activities on an account basis so that each importer is assigned to one Center. The establishment of the Centers has provided the trade community with an increased level of predictability and uniformity in the trade decisions and determinations while also reducing transaction costs through the capability to consolidate the submission of post-release documentation.

The Centers engage with the trade community to gain invaluable information on legitimate business practices which can be used to fine tune detections of illegitimate business practices. The Centers utilize that industry knowledge to expedite cargo release for legitimate imports and refine enforcement efforts to detect, deter and disrupt violative activities. Centers also serve as resources to the broader trade community and to CBP's U.S. government partners. Center personnel answer questions, provide information, and develop comprehensive trade facilitation strategies to address uniformity and compliance concerns.

The Center structure aligns specific revenue and trade positions into an organizational structure in the Field Offices that link employees across the nation through industry focused, multi-disciplinary teams. Through this structure CBP can assess trade risks on an account and industry-wide basis to increase compliance with import laws, protect the American public and economy, and enhance the effectiveness of enforcement efforts. The trade disciplines under the Center organization operate in a partly remote environment in that they process trade activities for accounts regardless of the port in which the cargo entered; however, they physically reside in a port of entry to provide support and expertise in cargo admissibility decisions.

## **3. Relevant private agencies and industry groups involved in your national or international initiatives/practices**

CBP routinely collaborates with the following private agencies and industry groups, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- Commercial Customs Operations Advisory Committee as a Federal advisor to CBP; National Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association of America; Pacific Coast Council; and various local and national industry associations.