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Notes

BEYOND THE SPICE ROAD



Shipping to Exhibitions in India

By Michelle Bruno

As early as 80 BC, Mediterranean merchants from Rome, Greece, and Egypt, used overland and sea routes called The Spice Road to ship goods into and out of India. Some things have changed since then. Today, shipments from all over the world are destined for India. Although modern ocean vessels, air cargo planes and trucks have replaced horses, camels, and wooden ships, India's shipping infrastructure is still a work in progress. As an important economic engine, India has worked tirelessly to create an efficient shipping and distribution system that meets international standards. However, when it comes to time-sensitive exhibition shipments, the country still has some work to do.

As one of the fastest growing economies in the world along with Brazil, Russia, and China, a number of opportunities exist for U.S. exhibition organizers and exhibitors in India (See *Global View Notes*, June 7, 2010). The number of modern shows is steadily increasing as is the quality of the trade show organizers. However, with only one or two exceptions, the exhibition venues are in need dire need of refurbishing. Traffic congestion from the ports and airports is nightmarish. Storage facilities are in poor condition and expensive. Here are some tips for exhibitors that will help to streamline shipping from the U.S. to India:

- Use exact shipment weights on all export documentation. Weight discrepancies may cause delays in clearance.
- Time logistics perfectly to ensure delivery to the show floor during move-in and avoid the high expense of storage if shipments arrive early.
- Prepare five copies of the commercial invoice along with two copies of product brochures. Goods being sent to India for temporary importation **MUST** be invoiced separately from those for permanent import.
- Send copies of commercial invoices at least 30 days in advance to determine whether import licenses will be required.
- Prepare invoices in English.
- Submit *original* sets of signed invoices and packing lists. Photocopies are **NOT** acceptable even if they contain original signatures.
- Declare realistic values on commercial invoices. Customs has set minimum values on many products and maintains the right to deny entry of shipments that appear incorrectly valued.
- Include complete descriptions, harmonized codes, quantities and weights on invoices to avoid delays, fines and/or seizures by customs authorities.
- Obtain an original Letter of Authorization and an Embassy Guarantee Letter for temporary imports.

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The Embassy Guarantee Letter is needed if you want the U.S. Embassy to establish the required guarantee and customs bond on your behalf. If you or your local representative provides the bank guarantee, this form is not necessary. One original is required for shipment.



- Obtain a Transit Guarantee from the U.S. Embassy for goods traveling by road between Bombay and New Delhi. This applies to goods under ATA Carnet and Bank Guarantees (temporary imports). Embassies will normally provide these.
- Begin return shipping procedures upon delivery of the cargo to the exhibition (for temporary imports) to avoid unnecessary charges at the bonded warehouse during exportation.

Sensitive shipments such as food, beverages, hazardous materials, medical supplies, and firearms always require special packing, handling and permits. An ATA Carnet can alleviate some of the requirements for temporary import shipments to India.

“The procedure sounds complex and exhibition shipments are somewhat more complicated than general cargo, however a good freight forwarder that specializes in exhibition shipments, preferably one that has a strong representative or an office in India, can simplify the process. The key is to allow ample time to have the documentation reviewed and entries prepared before the shipment arrives storage time is minimal and there is enough time for clearance and delivery,” says Jeanette Much, director national sales, Rogers Worldwide.

MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON INVOICES AND TEMPORARY IMPORT PERMITS

Commercial Invoice

The following items are required on your commercial invoice:

- Serial numbers or identifying marks
- Typewritten using simple terms. Handwritten documents are not acceptable.
- Values for each item should be listed in U.S. dollars
- Weights and dimensions in metric per case or carton. Conversion factors are: Pounds ÷ 2.2046 = Kilos, Inches X 2.54 = Centimeters
- Harmonized tariff codes for each item listed

Temporary Import Procedures & Requirements

The regulations for temporary importation for exhibitions in India are unusual and their application is strictly enforced. For this reason imported goods must remain under the control of the customs broker until they are released by Indian customs.

Upon arrival of exhibition cargo in India, it is necessary to present Indian customs with the import entries, a Bank or Embassy Guarantee, or ATA Carnet to cover the duty and taxes.

The Bank and Embassy Guarantees must be in place prior to arrival of your shipment in India and the Guarantee amount is normally 160 percent of the CIF (cost + insurance + freight) value unless specified differently by customs.

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