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Notes



THE ANATOMY OF A CUSTOMS ENTRY

By Michelle Bruno

Over the last decade, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has undergone a massive overhaul affecting imports for exhibitions and general merchandise. They have automated reporting systems in an attempt to streamline the clearance process, however, security concerns have prompted a tightening of the requirements resulting in additional forms, procedures, and penalties. Understanding the main documentation requirements can help exhibitors navigate the complexities of the clearance process.

A standard “entry packet” for a shipment arriving by airfreight consists of an Entry Summary (Form 7501), Entry/Immediate Delivery (Form 3461), commercial invoice, and an air waybill. The packet for shipments arriving by ocean freight contains an ocean bill of lading (instead of the airway bill). Ocean shipments also require an Importer Security Filing (ISF), filed electronically without a form. Most customs brokers have designed their own ISF forms to collect the data required for electronic submission.

The most common delays that occur during the clearance process are attributed to incorrect information on the airway bill or ocean bill of lading. Although exhibitors normally receive detailed shipping and consignment instructions from the official freight forwarder, the important details sometimes become “lost in translation,” causing difficulties at the port of entry in the U.S. Some of the most important details include:

- The **ultimate consignee on the Entry Summary and the Entry/Immediate Delivery forms MUST** match the ultimate consignee on the airway bill or ocean bill of lading.
- The **ultimate consignee on the airway bill or ocean bill of lading MUST** be the convention center or hotel where the exhibition is being held. For example, exhibition shipments destined for a show at McCormick Place in Chicago should be consigned as follows:
 - McCormick Place*
 - 2301 South Lake Shore Drive*
 - Chicago, IL 60616*
 - Exhibitor: ACMR Machinery*
 - International Machine Tool Show*
- The **description of goods** should be as detailed as possible on the airway bill or ocean bill of lading so that they match the description on the Entry Summary. For example, “Goods for Exhibition Purposes” is not an acceptable description.
- The **actual exhibitor, name, and address MUST** be listed as the Shipper (not the freight forwarder) on the air waybill or ocean bill of lading.
- The **Importer of Record** listed on both the Entry Summary and Entry/Immediate Delivery must be a U.S. Company with a federal ID number or the exhibitor’s customs broker.

Continued on page 2

