U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT)

FACT SHEET

Overview

The Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) program is a public-private partnership that serves as a critical layer in U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) multi-layered security strategy. Through this program, CBP works with the trade community to strengthen international supply chains and improve United States border security.

C-TPAT is a voluntary program. It enables CBP to enhance and streamline cargo security through close cooperation with the principle stakeholders of the international supply chain such as importers, carriers, consolidators, licensed customs brokers, and manufacturers. *The Security and Accountability for Every Port Act (SAFE Port Act) of 2006* provided a statutory framework for the C-TPAT program and imposed strict program oversight requirements.

Background

The program was established in response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. It was launched in November 2001 with seven major importers. Since then, the program has changed dramatically to include 10,512 certified partners that span the gamut of the trade community to include: U.S. importers; U.S./Canada highway carriers; U.S./Mexico highway carriers; rail and sea carriers; licensed U.S. Customs brokers; U.S. marine port authority/terminal operators; U.S. freight consolidators; ocean transportation intermediaries and non operating common carriers; Mexican and Canadian manufacturers; and Mexican long haul carriers. These 10,512 companies account for over 50 percent (by value) of goods imported into the United States.

Process

The program uses a "trust but verify" approach with the trade community. To apply to the program, a prospective partner submits basic company information and a security profile via an internet-based portal system. CBP conducts records checks on the company in its law enforcement and trade data bases and evaluates the security profile, ensuring the company meetings the minimum security criteria for its particular business sector. Those partners which pass initial vetting are certified into the program. Using a risk based approach, C-TPAT Supply Chain Security Specialists conduct onsite visit of foreign and domestic facilities to confirm the security practices are in place and operational.

The SAFE Port Act codifies C-TPAT and establishes certain time sensitive mandates such as reviewing and certifying security profiles within 90 days of submission; conducting validations within one year of certification and revalidations within four years of the initial validation. C-TPAT managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with these time frames as well as the timeliness, thoroughness, and accuracy of validation reports.

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Benefits

Through this initiative, CBP asks businesses to ensure the integrity of their security practices, and communicate and verify the security guidelines of their business partners within the supply chain. In exchange, CBP affords its C-TPAT members with certain benefits, including:

- **Front of the line privileges to C-TPAT containers that are selected for an examination.** To the extent possible and practicable the containers can be moved ahead of any non C-TPAT shipments awaiting exam, regardless of how long they have been there. This can translate into substantial monetary savings in that containers will not wait as long in line at a Container Examination Site and although they are still being examined, they will be processed more quickly than non-members.
- **Free and Secure Trade (FAST) lane access.** C-TPAT compliant shipments entering the U.S. from either Canada or Mexico are able to use designated lanes at numerous border crossings and have special consideration during the examination process. Highway carriers view FAST as a substantial benefit as it saves border crossing time and is an excellent marketing tool to show potential customers they are in compliance with C-TPAT's security criteria.
- **Access to individually-assigned C-TPAT Supply Chain Security Specialists** to discuss security issues.
- **Invitation to attend C-TPAT training and seminars** such as the annual C-TPAT conference which provides opportunities to network with other C-TPAT members.
- **Access to the web-based C-TPAT Portal system.**
- **Reduced examination rates.** C-TPAT importers are four to six times less likely to incur a security or compliance examination. To understand the scope of this benefit it is important to understand the extent to which CBP examination rates have increased since 2001. CBP has significantly increased its exam rates over the last several years due in large part to the increased use of non-intrusive inspection technology and other targeting tools.

Next Steps

In accordance with the World Customs Organization's *Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade*, C-TPAT has collaborated with several foreign customs administrations to align with their industry partnership programs, which effectively allows CBP to internationalize the core principles of the program and create global cargo security standards. Since 2007, C-TPAT has signed seven Mutual Recognition Arrangements with the customs administrations of: Canada, Jordan, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, the European Union and Taiwan. Future MRAs are in the works with Switzerland, Mexico, Israel, China, and Singapore.



C-TPAT is working with other U.S. Government agencies to evaluate the possibility of expanding the C-TPAT program to include U.S. exporters. They also continue to seek partnerships with OGAs to exchange common program information, metrics, and operational lessons in an effort to identify opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce redundancy within their respective trusted trader programs to ultimately streamline the process. ■