



U.S. CUSTOMS INSPECTIONS FOR IMPORT CARGO

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) often examines and inspects import shipments arriving at all ports of entry to the United States of America. CBP can opt to inspect any shipment. However, a minimal percentage of import shipments is selected for exam, but many importers are affected based on the vast daily number of importations arriving to the USA.

There are various types of exams. Some shipments are randomly selected, others are targeted at specific issues with particular types of shipments. Examinations may include one or more of the following various types:

- Document review.
- VACIS (Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System) X-ray exam of shipping containers (typically performed at an ocean carrier's terminal or general port contracted facilities).
- Sampling testing of products from a shipment to prevent cargo from being released before CBP can examine it. A "Customs hold" must be removed before the shipment can be released to the importer, or the designated customs broker.

Most Common types of CBP holds:

- **Manifest Hold** – based on information found in the importing carrier's manifest which CBP may find questionable.
- **Commercial Enforcement Team (CET) hold** – CBP enforces consumer product safety standards, copyright or trademark restrictions, or ensures correct classification and valuation of the goods
- **Statistical Validation hold** – individual shipments are statistically selected for verification of manifested quantities, listed commodity descriptions, and other probable discrepancies.

CBP exams can be documentary or an actual physical inspection of the goods while cargo is still under U.S. Customs custody. Such as but not limited to:

- VACIS (Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System) X-Ray exam of ocean containers offloaded from a specific targeted vessel.
- CBP Manifest Review Unit (MRU) demand for copies of shipment commercial documents, to compare with the details included on the importing carrier's manifest
- Opening and inspecting items from a consolidated shipment, after the cargo has been unloaded from the importing container at a bonded Container Freight Station (CFS)
- Requiring that a shipment be moved to a CBP-authorized bonded Centralized Examination Station (CES) for physical inspection by CBP designated staff