

Imports Containing Wood Packaging Materials: CBP Issues Reminder of Treatment and Marking Requirement

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has issued a notice to remind importers that wood packaging material (WPM) must be treated and marked in accordance with International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures No. 15 (ISPM 15), and warns that importers face potential loss of time and money due to the refusal of shipments that are infested or accompanied by uncertified wood packaging. The CBP notice is reprinted below.

Importers: Check Wood Packaging to Prevent Financial Loss

(07/01/2008) With pest-infested wood packaging materials a continuing presence at U.S. ports of entry, CBP is reminding importers to avoid potential losses by making sure that the material used to transport shipments is treated and marked in compliance with International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures No. 15 (ISPM 15) before it leaves the country of origin.

Aside from the risk that wood pests pose to the nation's agricultural system, the potential loss of time and money to importers who don't comply is significant, warns the agency, as CBP may reject shipments that are infested or accompanied by uncertified wood packaging. If importers try to send the shipment back to the point of origin for proper treatment and certification, re-shipment can take months.

Alternatively, if the importer attempts to export the infested shipment to another country, it may be rejected, as many other nations share our import standards in this area. Finally, if the importer abandons the shipment altogether, financial penalties result. And all of these scenarios can lead to factory shutdowns, late production penalties, and loss of business.

Additionally, says CBP, importers must be careful to avoid fraudulent wood packaging material certifiers, who may stamp the wood as treated without actually making sure that the pests inside have been eradicated. Importers are responsible for the state of the wood regardless of whether its certification is false.

ISPM 15 requires that all WPM such as pallets, crates, boxes and pieces of wood used to support or brace cargo that is entering or transiting through the United States, must be either heat treated or fumigated with methyl bromide. The WPM must also be marked with a legible and permanent mark that has been approved by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) certifying that it has been appropriately treated.

The USDA regulation currently provides an exemption from treatment and marking for WPM made entirely of Canadian origin wood or U.S. origin wood in trade between the two countries. The exemption only pertains to WPM coming directly to the U.S. from Canada or directly to Canada from the U.S. For purposes of enforcement of this exception, and absent acceptable proof to the contrary, CBP will consider the country of origin of the merchandise coming from Canada to be the country of origin of the accompanying WPM.

There have been unofficial reports that the U.S. and Canada have determined that the ISPM 15 WPM exemption between the two countries has become disadvantageous to controlling the introduction and spread of invasive species, and the two countries are in discussion about implementing a phased elimination of the exemption. We will continue to monitor this issue and will issue a NGJ International Trade Update if there are any further developments.

Additional information about WPM requirements is available on the CBP website at the following address:
http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/trade/priority_trade/agriculture/wpm/

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