

# LP BULLETIN

Friday 12 September 2008

## Bulletin 600 - 9/08 - Container sealing for US bound maritime cargo - USA

As of 15 October 2008, US Customs & Border Protection will require that all laden containers entering the US by sea must have seals which meet the ISO/PAS 17712 standard. This ruling is in effect for all cargo bound for the US, whether as a destination or passing through the country. In addition, details of seal numbers must be included in the Vessel Automated Manifest System (AMS) sent to the CBP at least twenty-four hours before the ship's departure for the US.

The ISO standard states that seals must not only be strong, but also uniquely and irreversibly marked; seals which are compliant with the standard are subject to tensile, shear, impact, and bending tests. It is important that the manufacturer is approved, so buyers must watch out for counterfeit seals on sale. The standard also requires that it is impossible to tamper with a seal without leaving readily apparent traces. Evidence of tampering includes a frayed appearance of cable or wire seals, or scratches on bold, rod or padlock-type seals.

The seals should, if possible, be placed on the seal brackets which are on the door sill and the bottom of the locking bar (if they are fitted) rather than on the higher seal brackets which are on the locking bar and the door. Some older containers do not have this facility. This prevents thieves removing the locking bar handle hub rivet and opening the doors without disturbing the seal and, after stealing, putting the rivet back in its place by gluing it in.

The shipper or consolidator should ensure that only authorised staff control and fix seals to containers once stuffing is complete. The Club has experienced cases where the truck driver has been left to fit the seal at the shipper's premises and deliberately not snapped it shut – en route the container was opened, cargo stolen and then the seal applied properly. Ideally, details of seals used should also be recorded at nodal points in the supply chain and physically checked for integrity.

It is understood that empty containers are not subject to the new CBP requirement. These can be left unsealed as well as tankcontainers, open-tops, and those which cannot accommodate a seal. For C-TPAT participants these regulations are not new; however, they are now required of all containers entering the US by sea. CBP may assess civil penalties against a party responsible for violation of the sealing requirements, including detaining the ship.

Members should notify shippers at the time of booking a container destined to the US of the new seal requirements so that any penalty received can be billed back to the shipper - the party responsible for sealing containers and issuing the seal numbers to the carrier prior to loading.

Source of information: US Customs & Border Protection  
[www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)

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