

# Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the C-TPAT Program: Part I

by Michelle Kelley - Tuesday, September 04, 2007

If you've imported anything into the U.S. in the last five years, you've no doubt heard about the C-TPAT program. More than just an acronym, C-TPAT (Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism) membership is fastly becoming an industry standard for U.S. importers. So just what is C-TPAT and why is it so important? Find out in our three part series, *Everything you ever wanted to know about C-TPAT*.

## Part I: The birth of C-TPAT

September 11th forever changed the nation's perspective on homeland security. It shattered the myth that the United States was immune to domestic attacks, and exposed severe flaws in everything from intra-government agency communication to airport security. As a result, our focus changed. Our entire federal government had to begin the process of assessing and addressing our domestic vulnerabilities. This included U.S. Customs, the agency responsible for securing the nation's borders.

In the course of this reexamination process, Customs realized that securing the flow of goods coming into the United States was a vital component of border protection. Therefore, with seven million containers entering the U.S. per year<sup>1</sup>, the only way to secure the international supply chain, would be for Customs to engage the help of businesses that composed the supply chain. Thus, in 2002, Customs introduced C-TPAT, a voluntary program designed to promote cooperation between Customs and international business partners, with the ultimate goal of fortifying the global supply chain and U.S. border security.

## Participation at a glance

As of this year, there are 7,031 C-TPAT certified companies, and over 7,000 more who could be certified by the end of December<sup>2</sup>. Though the program is strictly voluntary, only certain types of companies (listed below) are eligible. These include,

- U.S. Importers of record;
- U.S./Canada & US/Mexico highway carriers;
- rail, sea, and air carriers;
- U.S. Marine Port Authority/terminal operators;
- U.S. air freight consolidators, ocean transportation intermediaries and Non-Vessel Operating Common Carriers (NVOCC);
- Mexican/Canadian/certain invited foreign manufacturers; and
- licensed U.S. Customs Brokers.

Eligible companies must apply with U.S. Customs to participate in C-TPAT, and certification is not guaranteed. C-TPAT certification is, in fact, a multi-step process, which will be covered in more detail in Part III of this series. By participating in the program, member companies must commit to ensuring the integrity of their supply chain. In exchange for their commitment, Customs affords these companies with special privileges.

*Stay tuned for the October issue of Global View to read the next installment of our series, Part II: What C-TPAT can do for you.*



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