

2. American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists, "Appearance of Fabrics After Repeated Home Laundering," AATCC Test Method 124-1996, AATCC Technical Manual, Vol. 73, 1997.

3. Briefing memorandum from Margaret Neily, Project Manager, Directorate for Engineering Sciences, to the Commission, "Proposed Amendments to Flammable Fabrics Act Standards to Replace Obsolete Standard Detergent and Update Laundering Procedures Required for Tests," ———, 1998.

4. Memorandum from Gail Stafford, Directorate for Laboratory Sciences, to Margaret Neily, Project Manager, "Amending the Laundering Provisions of the CPSC Flammability Regulations," August 18, 1998.

5. Memorandum from Gail Stafford, Directorate for Laboratory Sciences, to Margaret Neily, Project Manager, "Textile Laundering Standards," August 18, 1998.

6. Memorandum from Gail Stafford and Shing-Bong Chen, Directorate for Laboratory Sciences, to Margaret Neily, Project Manager, "Detergent Comparison Tests," August 19, 1998.

7. Log of Meeting on January 21, 1998 concerning Flammability Test of Pyrovatex-treated Flame Resistant Fabrics.

8. Memorandum from Terrance R. Karels, Directorate for Economic Analysis, to Margaret Neily, Project Manager, "Amendments to FFA Standards," August 10, 1998.

9. Memorandum from Margaret Neily, Project Manager, Directorate for Engineering Sciences, to the Commission, "Briefing Package Supplement: Laundering/Detergent Update for Flammable Fabrics Act Standards—The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA) Laundering Procedures," January 11, 1999.

10. Memorandum from Gail Stafford, Directorate for Laboratory Sciences, to Margaret Neily, Project Manager, "Soap and Detergent Association Proposed Laundering Procedure," December 23, 1998.

11. Letter from Jenan Al-Atrash, Director, Human Health & Safety, The Soap and Detergent Association, to Margaret Neily, Technical Program Coordinator, Office of the Executive Director, including SDA Recommended Wash Conditions for CFR 1615.4, September 15, 1998.

12. Letter from Jenan Al-Atrash, Director, Human Health & Safety, The Soap and Detergent Association, to Margaret Neily, Technical Program Coordinator, Office of the Executive Director, follow-up comments to September 15, 1998, letter, November 12, 1998.

13. Memorandum from Margaret L. Neily, Project Manager, Directorate for Engineering Sciences, to the Commission, "Laundering/Detergent Updates—FR notice supplements," February 19, 1999.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

19 CFR Part 24

RIN 1515-AC40

Expanded Methods of Payment of Duties, Taxes, Interest and Fees

AGENCY: Customs Service, Department of the Treasury.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking.

SUMMARY: This document proposes to amend the Customs Regulations to expand the number of ways that Customs will accept payment of duties, taxes, fees, interest and other charges. Currently, the regulations allow payment by credit or charge cards that have been authorized by the Commissioner of Customs only at designated locations, and then only by non-commercial entities. In this document, Customs is proposing to allow payment by any electronic technology or charge cards (debit cards or credit cards) that are authorized by the Commissioner of Customs and to remove the limitation that these methods of payment may only be used by non-commercial entities. These changes, if adopted, will assist Customs in improving customer service and financial management.

DATE: Comments must be received on or before May 17, 1999.

ADDRESS: Written comments may be submitted to and comments submitted may be inspected at the Regulations Branch, Office of Regulations and Rulings, U.S. Customs Service, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW., Third Floor, Washington, DC 20229.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Elizabeth Dichysyn, Accounting Services Division, U.S. Customs Service, 317-298-1200, extension 1339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Section 24.1(a)(7) of the current Customs Regulations (19 CFR 24.1(a)(7)) provides for the use of credit or charge cards that have been authorized by the Commissioner of Customs for the payment of duties, taxes and/or other charges at Customs service locations for non-commercial entries, subject to ultimate collection from the credit card company. Payment by this manner is currently limited to non-commercial entries. Persons paying by charge or credit card remain liable for all such charges until paid.

This proposed regulation would extend this privilege to commercial entries and allow payment through the use of electronic technology or by the

use of credit cards (either debit cards or credit cards) authorized by the Commissioner of Customs. These changes will assist Customs in improving customer service and financial management. The proposal affords Customs customers the broadest range of payment options.

Also, Customs proposes to revise the heading and text of both introductory paragraph (a) and paragraph (a)(1) to include the terms "fees" and "interest" to reflect that the proposed payment methods may be used to pay fees assessed pursuant to 19 U.S.C. 58a through 58c and to pay fees and interest pursuant to 19 U.S.C. 1505, as amended by section 642 of the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act.

Comments

Before adopting this proposal, consideration will be given to any written comments timely submitted to Customs. Comments submitted will be available for public inspection in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), § 1.4, Treasury Department Regulations (31 CFR 1.4), and § 103.11(b), Customs Regulations (19 CFR 103.11(b)), on regular business days between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at the Regulations Branch, Office of Regulations and Rulings, U.S. Customs Service, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW., Third Floor, Washington, DC 20229.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

Because this proposal expands the options available for payments due to Customs and facilitates the public payment process, it is certified that the amendment will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Accordingly, the proposed amendment is not subject to the regulatory analysis or other requirements of 5 U.S.C. 603 or 604.

Executive Order 12866

This document does not meet the criteria for a significant regulatory action under Executive Order (E.O.) 12866.

Drafting Information

The principal author of this document was Janet L. Johnson, Regulations Branch. However, personnel from other offices participated in its development.

List of Subjects in 19 CFR Part 24

Accounting, Claims, Fees, Financial and accounting procedures, Imports, Taxes.

Proposed Amendments to the Regulations

It is proposed to amend part 24, Customs Regulations (19 CFR part 24), as set forth below.

PART 24—CUSTOMS FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING PROCEDURE

1. The general authority citation for part 24 and the relevant specific authority for § 24.1 would continue to read as follows:

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 301; 19 U.S.C. 58a–58c, 66, 1202 (General Note 20, Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States), 1450, 1624; 31 U.S.C. 9701. § 24.1 also issued under 19 U.S.C. 197, 198, 1648;

* * * * *

2. It is proposed to amend § 24.1 by revising the heading, paragraph (a), introductory text, and paragraph (a)(7) to read as follows:

§ 24.1 Collection of Customs duties, taxes, fees, interest and other charges.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, the following procedure applies to the collection of Customs duties, taxes, fees, interest and other charges (see §§ 111.29(b) and 141.1(b) of this chapter):

* * * * *

(7) Wherever authorized by the Commissioner of Customs, transfer of funds through electronic technology or use of charge cards (either debit cards or credit cards) authorized by the Commissioner of Customs may be used for payment of duties, taxes, fees, interest and/or other charges to Customs. Persons using these methods to make payment to Customs remain liable for the amounts transferred or charged until Customs receives payment. Payment by these methods is subject to ultimate collection from the financial institution or charge card company. Information about authorized methods of payment at specific Customs locations may be obtained from Customs officers.

* * * * *

Raymond W. Kelly,
Commissioner of Customs.

Approved: February 16, 1999.

Dennis M. O'Connell,
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Customs Service

19 CFR Part 146

RIN 1515–AC05

Weekly Entry Procedure for Foreign Trade Zones

AGENCY: Customs Service, Department of the Treasury.

ACTION: Proposed rule; withdrawal.

SUMMARY: This document withdraws the proposed amendments to the Customs Regulations that would have expanded the weekly entry procedure for foreign trade zones to include merchandise involved in activities other than exclusively assembly-line type production operations. Customs has determined that the proposed expanded weekly entry procedure would significantly reduce the collection of the merchandise processing fee (MPF) that Customs needs to offset its administrative costs incurred in processing imported merchandise that is formally entered or released.

DATE: The withdrawal is effective on March 17, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Linda Walfish, Office of Field Operations, (202–927–0042).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Foreign Trade Zones Act of 1934, as amended (19 U.S.C. 81a–u) (the “FTZA”) provides for the establishment and regulation of foreign trade zones. Foreign trade zones are secured areas to which foreign and domestic merchandise, except that prohibited by law, may be exempted from the Customs laws of the United States for the purposes enumerated in the FTZA. Foreign trade zones, by virtue of their potential to allow exemption from the Customs laws, are intended to attract and promote legitimate international trade and commerce.

Part 146, Customs Regulations (19 CFR part 146), sets forth the documentation and recordkeeping requirements governing, among other things, the admission of merchandise into a zone, its manipulation, manufacture, storage, destruction or exhibition while in the zone, and its entry and removal from the zone.

To this latter end, Customs has in place a weekly entry procedure for foreign trade zones, as prescribed in § 146.63(c)(1), Customs Regulations (19 CFR 146.63(c)(1)). Under the procedure, instead of requiring a separate entry for each removal of merchandise from a

zone, as would otherwise be the case, Customs accepts one entry from a zone user covering all its anticipated removals from an entire weekly period. The use of this procedure, however, has been limited exclusively to merchandise that is manufactured or changed into its final form just shortly (within 24 hours) before physical transfer from the zone.

The weekly entry procedure is believed to be especially necessary for assembly-line type manufacturing operations because, in these circumstances, there would otherwise be little time for examination of the merchandise and furnishing of entry documentation after the merchandise was in its final form but before its physical removal from the zone. Thus, under the weekly entry process, the assembly-line operation would not have to be delayed pending acceptance of an entry and Customs examination of the merchandise.

On March 14, 1997, Customs published in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 12129) a notice of proposed rulemaking that would have expanded the use of weekly entry by adding a weekly entry procedure to cover merchandise involved in activities other than manufacturing operations. It was expected that the expanded weekly entry procedure would be available to zones (including subzones) having large quantities of different types of merchandise.

The principal purpose of the proposed expanded weekly entry procedure, which would have required electronic entry filing, was to reduce the number of paper entries from zones and further facilitate the processing of zone entries, with resulting reductions in paperwork and associated industry costs.

In order to test the expanded weekly entry procedure, a pilot program had been authorized in September 1994 for a selected number of zones/subzones.

Effect on Merchandise Processing Fee

Based upon further evaluation of the pilot program, and comments made by zone operators and others on the proposed rule, it is clear that the expanded procedure would significantly impact Customs collection of the merchandise processing fee (MPF). This poses a serious funding concern for the Government.

Under 19 U.S.C. 58c(a)(9)(A) and (B)(i), the MPF is the fee that Customs assesses on importers in order to offset its administrative costs (salaries and expenses) incurred in connection with the processing of imported merchandise that is formally entered or released. The fees collected are deposited in the