

two paragraphs are corrected to read as follows:

For the semi-monthly processing prototype, the following restrictions will be placed on the importers:

1. Initially, only merchandise entered for consumption or withdrawn from a Customs bonded warehouse or Foreign Trade Zone for consumption at the following ports will be eligible for the semi-monthly processing prototype:

Dated: April 6, 1998.

**Charles W. Winwood,**

*National Trade Compliance Process Owner.*

[FR Doc. 98-9440 Filed 4-9-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4820-02-P

## DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

### Customs Service

#### Tariff Classification of Drilled Softwood Lumber

**AGENCY:** U.S. Customs Service, Department of Treasury.

**ACTION:** General notice.

**SUMMARY:** On October 27, 1997, Customs published a **Federal Register** document soliciting comments regarding the commercial uses of wood studs with drilled holes. Based on the comments received, it has been decided to proceed, pursuant to section 625(c)(1), Tariff Act of 1930 (19 U.S.C. 1625(c)(1)), with a notice advising interested parties that Customs proposes to revoke the ruling that was the subject of that solicitation of comments.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Josephine Baiamonte, Textile Classification Branch, (202) 927-2394.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

On October 27, 1997, Customs published a **Federal Register** document (62 FR 55667) soliciting comments regarding the commercial uses of wood studs with drilled holes. Based on the comments received, it has been decided to proceed, pursuant to section 625(c)(1), Tariff Act of 1930 (19 U.S.C. 1625(c)(1)), as amended by section 623 of Title VI (Customs Modernization) of the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Pub. L. 103-182, 107 Stat. 2057), with a notice advising interested parties that Customs proposes to revoke the ruling that was the subject of that solicitation of comments. Comments on the proposed action will be entertained during the 30 day period following publication of the notice of proposed action in the

Customs Bulletin pursuant to section 625(c)(1).

**Douglas M. Browning,**

*Acting Commissioner of Customs.*

Approved: April 6, 1998.

**John P. Simpson,**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.*

[FR Doc. 98-9530 Filed 4-9-98; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

### Customs Service

#### Announcement of Program Test: Collection of Truck User Fees at Houlton, Maine and Champlain, New York by Means of Electronic Commerce Technology

**AGENCY:** Customs Service, Treasury.

**ACTION:** General notice.

**SUMMARY:** This notice announces Customs plan to test a simplified procedure pertaining to the collection of commercial truck user fees at the ports located at Houlton, Maine and Champlain, New York. The test will allow for the payment of the fees by use of electronic commerce technology, and is designed to reduce the manual collection and processing of cash fees by Customs Inspectors at truck booths at these two ports, thus, allowing them to focus on inspectional work. Public comments concerning any aspect of the test are solicited.

**EFFECTIVE DATES:** This test will commence no earlier than May 11, 1998 and will run for approximately six months, with evaluations of the program occurring periodically. Comments must be received on or before May 11, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments regarding this notice or any aspect of this test should be addressed to Richard Wilcox, North Atlantic Customs Management Center, 10 Causeway Street, Suite 801, Boston, Massachusetts 02222-1056.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Supervisory Customs Inspector Dennis Grenier, Port Trade Compliance Process Owner, Houlton, Maine, (207) 532-2131; or, Richard Wilcox, North Atlantic Customs Management Center, Boston, Massachusetts, (617) 565-6324.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The Customs Regulations pertaining to the collection of certain user fees for Customs Services provide that these fee payments shall be in the amounts prescribed and shall be in U.S. currency, or by check or money order

payable to the United States Customs Service, in accordance with the provisions of § 24.1 (19 CFR 24.1). See 19 CFR 24.22(i)(1). In the case of commercial trucks, the fees are \$5.00 per arrival, unless a \$100.00 prepayment has been made for the calendar year and a decal has been affixed to the vehicle windshield to show that the vehicle is exempt from payment of the fee on an individual arrival basis during the applicable calendar year. See 19 CFR 24.22(c).

This fee collection procedure has tasked Customs officers for years to collect the \$5.00 user fee, in cash, from those commercial trucks that do not display an annual decal. In general, there are several problems which arise from this cash collection system. On the remitting side, often, the driver has no cash or only has foreign currency. On the collection side, Customs officers must spend many hours each day collecting, verifying, reporting, depositing, and administering this system, which keeps them from attending to inspectional and supervisory work. Further, large trucking companies complain that, because of the way the present user fee system operates, *i.e.*, it is only economical to purchase annual decals for those trucks that are routinely utilized in cross-border deliveries, the non-decaled portion of their commercial trucking fleets have become "captive" to utilization in less profitable ventures. These large trucking companies argue that if all their trucks could be utilized for timely cross-border work, this circumstance would enable them to employ their resources more efficiently and profitably.

As an example, under the present fee collection procedure followed at the Houlton, Maine, port of entry, the Customs inspector visually checks the truck window for the presence of a decal. If there is a decal, the inspector proceeds to the entry/examination/release cargo process. If there is no decal, the inspector must collect \$5.00 in U.S. currency, as required by § 24.22(i)(1), Customs Regulations (19 CFR 24.22(i)(1)). Should the driver wish to purchase a decal at the time he drives up to the booth, the inspector will have the driver park the truck and go into the Customs/INS lobby area and purchase the decal there. If the driver has neither the decal nor the U.S. \$5.00, then the driver is told to park the truck and ask the customs broker preparing the entry for the \$5.00 to pay the fee. Should this not occur, the driver must wait until either another driver lends him the \$5.00 or a trucking company representative arrives at the port with

the payment. Approximately 33 percent of the roughly 450 trucks arriving daily at the Houlton port of entry pay the user fee in cash.

The inspector who collects the \$5.00 fee at Houlton rings it into the cash register and issues a receipt to the driver. The senior inspector or supervisor will then reconcile the cash each day and turn it over to either a Customs aide or supervisor for a second verification, and the money then will be placed in the safe. Two or three times a week, an SF 215B Deposit Form is prepared by the Customs aide or a supervisor, and the money is driven to the local bank for deposit. This procedure requires many man-hours of administrative work and is not an efficient method for the collection and processing of the \$5.00 cash fees.

To address this situation, Customs at Houlton, Maine put together a Process Improvement Group: the Group was comprised of representatives from Yellow Freight Trucking, the American Trucking Association, and Roadway Express, Inc., the Vice President of KeyBank of Maine, and two Customs Management Center facilitators. The members of this Group were guided through the process improvement techniques, created a mission statement, and determined that the test program should only be conducted at Houlton, Maine and Champlain, New York, and that, if successful, it could then be expanded to other test locations. The mission statement adopted for this test program states that it is to develop an efficient system/process for user fee payments by trucks, without the use of cash or decals, for the benefit of all users and Customs. The Group concluded that some form of automated debit technology, such as a credit or debit card system, should be utilized, one which would be uniform in application nationally and would accept major credit cards such as VISA and MASTERCARD.

#### **The Proposed Truck User Fee Collection System at Houlton**

According to the simplified procedure proposed to be tested, the Customs inspector will visually check the truck window for the presence of a user fee decal. If there is no decal, the inspector will either collect the U.S. \$5.00 in accordance with the existing procedure, or accept a VISA or MASTERCARD credit card from the driver, process it through an automated system that will deposit the user fee directly into the Treasury account via the Mellon Bank, issue a receipt to the driver, keep a copy for Customs accounting purposes, and process the merchandise transaction.

In this scenario, there will be much less handling of currency, less administrative work required of supervisors and senior inspectors, more control over the deposits, and fewer trips to the bank to deliver cash. It will also allow those trucking companies with "captive" fleets to use all of their trucks for cross-border work, whether or not they have decals. This system actually could eliminate the need for truck decals altogether.

The implementation of such a user-friendly system would enable Customs internal and external customers to work more efficiently and effectively, eliminate the need for processing cash by Customs inspectors, provide a secure deposit of fees directly into the Treasury account, and free up resources and equipment for all concerned.

To aid in the development of this initiative, Customs proposes a temporary change to the current procedures concerning the collection of truck user fees to allow for the electronic payment of this user fee by credit card. Accordingly, the fee payment requirements contained in § 24.22(i)(1) of the Customs Regulations will be suspended during this test period so that electronic commerce technology will be accepted. This procedure will only apply at the ports located at Houlton, Maine and Champlain, New York, and will not otherwise affect the procedures relating to other forms of user fee payments which are still in effect. Trucking companies who wish to participate in this pilot program should experience faster service, fewer delays at the truck booth, and enhanced service to their cross-border customers.

Pursuant to Customs Modernization provisions in the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (the Act), Pub. L. 103-182, 107 Stat. 2057, 2170 (December 8, 1993), Customs amended its regulations (19 CFR chapter I), in part, to enable the Commissioner of Customs to conduct limited test programs/procedures designed to evaluate the effectiveness of new technology or operations procedures, which have as their goal the more efficient and effective processing of passengers, carriers, and merchandise. Section 101.9(a) of the Customs Regulations (19 CFR 101.9(a)) allows for such general testing. See, TD 95-21. This test is established pursuant to that regulatory provision.

The implementation date for a test of this new procedure will be in early May of 1998 (approximately 30 days from publication in the **Federal Register**). Upon implementation, Customs at Houlton, Maine and Champlain, New

York will begin an evaluation period of at least six months to ensure the effectiveness of the program and to identify any shortfalls. If the program is successful, Customs will amend its regulations to make the new procedure permanent.

#### **Regulatory Provisions Affected**

During the automated user fee collection test, the normal user fee collection requirements of 19 CFR 24.22(i)(1) will be suspended.

#### **Enforcement Provisions**

Nothing in this test in any way interferes with Customs enforcement activities. Cargo will still be examined for compliance with laws and regulations, stratified examinations will continue, and targeted shipments will be stripped out of the trucks and examined as usual.

#### **Comments and Evaluation of Test**

Customs will review all public comments received concerning any aspect of the test program or procedures, and finalize procedures in light of those comments. Approximately 120 days after the conclusion of the test, evaluations of the test will be conducted and final results will be made available to the public upon request.

Dated: April 7, 1998.

**Robert S. Trotter,**

*Assistant Commissioner, Office of Field Operations.*

[FR Doc. 98-9531 Filed 4-9-98; 8:45 am]

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### **UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY**

#### **Culturally Significant Objects Imported for Exhibition Determination**

Notice is hereby given of the following determination: Pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Act of October 19, 1965 (79 Stat. 985, 22 U.S.C. 2459), Executive Order 12047 of March 27, 1978 (43 FR 13359, March 29, 1978), and Delegation Order No. 85-5 of June 27, 1985 (50 FR 27393, July 2, 1985), I hereby determine that the objects to be included in the exhibit, "Princes, Poets & Paladins" (See <sup>1</sup> list), imported from abroad for the temporary exhibition without profit within the United States, are of cultural significance. These objects are imported pursuant to a loan agreement with the foreign lenders. I

<sup>1</sup> A copy of this list may be obtained by contacting Ms. Lorie Nierenberg, Assistant General Counsel, at (202) 619-6084, and the address is U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW, Room 700, Washington, DC 20547-0001.