

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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WTCA Update

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CBP Deadline for Electronic Cargo Information Looming by Sean D. Shields

Brace yourself—and your carrier—for new U.S. Customs and Border Protection regulations!

If you receive goods from either Canada or Mexico, you should make certain you or your carrier is complying with the new regulations finalized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Beginning this month, certain U.S. ports of entry will begin requiring advanced electronic information for shipments imported into the country by commercial truck carriers. The cargo information is required by the CBP to enable high-risk shipments to be identified for purposes of ensuring cargo safety and security and preventing smuggling.

The CBP has planned to implement this system in three stages. The first stage, beginning on November 15, will include ports of entry in New York, Michigan, Washington, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. Implementation of the second stage will begin on December 15, and the third stage will commence on January 14, 2005. For a complete list of ports of entry affected, please go to the CBP web site at www.customs.ustreas.gov/.

The CBP, as required under Section 343(a) of the Trade Act of 2002, has finalized regulations pertaining to the presentation of cargo information as goods cross the border. Those regulations stipulate that carriers must provide data to the agency through an approved electronic data interchange (EDI) system at least one hour before the shipment arrives at the border. One exception to this requirement is for truck carriers who transport goods qualified for clearance under the Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program, in which case the data can be transferred up to one-half hour before the goods enter the country.

This move is another step in CBP's process of creating the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) system. The goal of ACE is to have "One Screen at the Border" so that goods can move more quickly across the border while maintaining national security. This portal has been made available at the border to provide a single, centralized online access point to connect CBP and the trade community.

The ACE Truck Manifest is the final step in this process, which will allow the CBP to "e-release" vehicles, containers, and other conveyances, based on their electronically filed entries and manifests. Transponders will be used to allow for easy identification of trucks so that, prior to their approach, the inspector at the booth can retrieve the cargo manifest.

However, until the ACE Truck Manifest becomes fully operational, two interim EDI systems have been approved by the CBP to comply with the new regulations: the Pre-Arrival Processing System (PAPS) and the QP/WP automated broker system. As an additional temporary accommodation, the CBP has also made two exceptions for carriers already using either the Customs Automated Forms Entry System (CAFES) or the Border Release Advanced Screening and Selectivity program (BRASS). With BRASS, carriers must only use FAST-approved drivers; the importer and shipper involved in the transaction must be current BRASS participants; and the importer and shipper must have engaged in at least 50 shipments the previous year, although CBP retains the right to change that number at any time.

If you receive goods from across the border, you can help the process in two ways:

1. Contact your carrier to ensure they are ready to comply with these new regulations.
2. Contact the CBP and provide them with as much information as you can about the nature of the goods you are having transported.

Following these two steps should help ensure that you receive your products in a timely manner so you don't find yourself scrambling for materials because your shipment is being held up at its port of entry.

TPI Endorsement of In-Plant WTCA QC

Building departments nationwide are beginning to revise their codes to the most current version of the ICC's International Building and Residential Codes (IBC & IRC 2003). This is fostering building designers and building officials becoming more sophisticated, and they also now have more convenient access to a wide variety of information. Thus, each are increasingly asking more difficult questions. In this environment, our engineering design process and the quality of our manufactured product can quickly come under increased scrutiny. Couple this with the legal environment in which we operate and the spotlight can become more intense.

Our industry has long recognized the critical ties between the truss design process and the truss manufacturing process. This is displayed in the hard work we have undertaken to advance our industry's technical credibility through the ANSI/TPI-1 consensus process, while at the same time protecting our industry from those outside of our business that desire stiffer regulations. As our industry continues to grow and mature, we will be subjected to an increasing outside emphasis on having effective quality control procedures in place. TPI has worked closely with WTCA and the consensus body to create a standardized approach to quality that properly weighs the competing demands of efficient production and necessary structural quality.

WTCA has taken the quality control process one step further by creating a quality management system called In-Plant WTCA QC, which uses as its foundation the ANSI/TPI 1-2002 quality requirements. The goal of In-Plant WTCA QC is to provide our industry with a system that allows any component manufacturer to quickly obtain quality control data from manufacturing, determine conformance to the ANSI/TPI 1 standard, and use the data collected to better manage

manufacturing trends over time and truss plant operations overall. For instance, the data collected has helped to find problem trends with machinery that could then be corrected early.

TPI endorses and is promoting the use of In-Plant WTCA QC as the best in-plant quality management system available to our industry. Additionally, TPI's third party inspection forms match the In-Plant WTCA QC formwork. This serves as a dual quality management benefit for those plants that use TPI as their third party inspection agency—they have data on the in-plant manufacturing processes and on the third party quality assurance process, while providing an efficient and paperless tracking system for upper management monitoring and action.

We encourage you to visit WTCA's web site to obtain more information on [In-Plant WTCA QC](#). If you have any questions please call us, or WTCA.

Sincerely,
TRUSS PLATE INSTITUTE
William Turnbull
President

WTCA Thank You Letter to TPI

Dear Bill:

We would like to formally thank you for the letter TPI sent to the SBC mailing list on July 9 endorsing the In-Plant WTCA QC program and also promoting attendance at BCMC.

Our office has received several calls as a result of this letter and it again points out the significance of our two industries' collaboration. We are encouraged by the strong relationship between our organizations and are excited about the cooperation that is certain to strengthen our industry and make the relationship between WTCA and TPI even more valuable over time.

Again, thank you for the letter and for your support.

Sincerely,
Daniel N. Holland
President

Joseph D. Hikel
QC Committee Chair

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