



# Regulatory News Alerts & Updates

## **Regulatory Alert: U.S. Customs Emphasizes Description Quality**

September 25, 2024

### **BACKGROUND**

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) issued communications to the trade industry regarding its intent to address vague merchandise descriptions. Examples of these communications can be found in Cargo Systems Messaging Service (CSMS) message #60144714 and CSMS message #62263081 (both linked in the References section below). CBP is reminding the trade industry that precise, or specific, descriptions of the cargo being shipped are required by various CBP regulations; including for express consignments as specified in 19 CFR 128.21(a)(4).

Vague or imprecise descriptions such as “parts,” “daily necessities,” “see commercial invoice,” “part number 123456”, or “accessories” do not provide the clarity CBP requires. A non-exhaustive list of precise description examples, as well as unacceptable cargo descriptions, can be found on the CBP website in the References section.

Precise descriptions accurately describe what the goods are made of and their intended use. Examples include “children’s toys made of plastic” rather than “toys” and “women’s dresses made of 60% cotton 40% polyester” rather than “clothing”.

### **WHAT HAS CHANGED?**

CBP has announced via CSMS message #62490006 that it would begin rejecting any U.S. import shipment data containing vague descriptions effective November 12, 2024. This rejection will make it impermissible to move shipments into the U.S. until complete data is submitted.

FedEx customers are reminded of the importance of providing precise cargo descriptions when creating their shipments with FedEx to ensure their shipments comply with CBP’s regulations. After the effective date, any shipments identified by CBP as containing vague descriptions will be rejected by CBP and may incur delays.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q 1** - What does CBP mean by a “precise cargo description”?

A 1 - While CBP is referencing a specific regulatory requirement for U.S. imports, CBP has also provided a non-exhaustive list of more than 100 comparisons of poor descriptions and precise descriptions to help illustrate to the trade how to create a precise cargo description. Those examples can be found on the CBP e-commerce landing page in the final link of the References section below.

**Q 2** – Where do I provide a commodity description?

A 2 - The commodity description(s) are provided during the shipment creation process and must properly describe the contents of the shipment. The airway bill description should match the commercial invoice description.

## REFERENCES

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Precise Description Examples

<https://www.cbp.gov/trade/basic-import-export/e-commerce/examples-unacceptable-vs-acceptable-cargo-descriptions>

CBP Regulation 19 CFR 128.21(a)(4)

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-19/part-128#p-128.21\(a\)\(4\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-19/part-128#p-128.21(a)(4))

CSMS # 62490006 (*updated*) - Revised Deadline for Vague Merchandise Descriptions in ACAS

[https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/USDHSCBP-3b98596?wgt\\_ref=USDHSCBP\\_WIDGET\\_2](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/USDHSCBP-3b98596?wgt_ref=USDHSCBP_WIDGET_2)

CSMS # 60011750 - Announcement of Vague Merchandise Description Cargo Messages

[https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/USDHSCBP-393b4e6?wgt\\_ref=USDHSCBP\\_WIDGET\\_2](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/USDHSCBP-393b4e6?wgt_ref=USDHSCBP_WIDGET_2)

CSMS # 60144714 - Update on Vague Merchandise Description Cargo Messages

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSCBP/bulletins/395bc4a>

Keep up with the latest alerts, trade-related rules, updates and learning opportunities. Sign up to receive Regulatory News emails from FedEx.

[https://page.message.fedex.com/regnews\\_signup/](https://page.message.fedex.com/regnews_signup/)