



CONTAINER EXAMINATION FACILITIES

WHAT ARE CONTAINER EXAMINATION FACILITIES (CEFS)?

The CEFS are purpose-built integrated examination facilities that house large x-ray systems and a range of other technologies to enable the rapid inspection and physical examination of selected sea cargo. They assist Customs to detect prohibited goods, including illicit drugs, illegal firearms and other harmful goods, and assist in the verification of compliance with import and export requirements.

CEFs operate six days a week in the ports of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Fremantle and five days a week in Adelaide. A smaller container examination building is located in Darwin. These facilities inspect over 100,000 containers (around 133,000 twenty foot equivalent units, TEU), annually.

Logistics costs for CEF operations are recovered via the Import Processing Charge (IPC), while all other costs of operating the CEFS are borne by the Federal Government. Total government funding for the construction and ongoing operations of the facilities is around \$250 million.

CEF technology enables Customs to accurately and rapidly inspect a higher percentage of cargo than was previously possible, fulfilling its border-protection role and assisting industry through faster processing times. The CEFS also utilise other Customs resources, including pallet and cabinet x-ray units, detector dogs and trace particle detection technology.

HOW CEFS WORK

Manifests are lodged electronically at least two days before a vessel's arrival. All manifests are screened and assessed for risk. Selections for examination are made on the basis of these assessments.

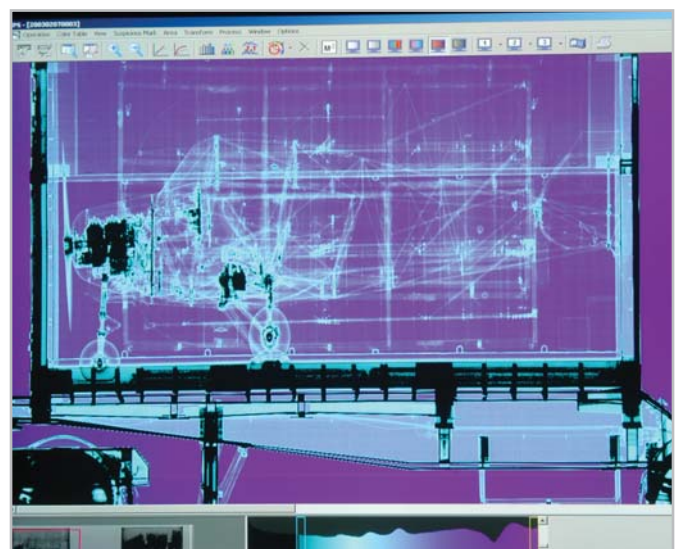
Customs places a hold on selected cargo and notifies the Container Terminal Operator (CTO) that the container is required at the CEF. The CTO and a Customs-managed road transport service transfers the selected container to the CEF in priority order.

At all CEFS other than Adelaide, the truck drives into the x-ray hall and the container is scanned while still on the truck. X-ray inspection, including analysis, takes approximately 15 minutes. Around 90% of cargo is processed and returned to the wharf within 30 minutes. When the container leaves the facility, the CEF hold is removed.

If the x-ray image reveals that further investigation is required, the container is unloaded for detailed physical examination. In Adelaide, all containers are unloaded for physical examination. All such containers are tested for fumigants and are de-fumigated where required. Under Customs supervision, contracted labour unpacks, and repacks, containers requiring examination. In most cases, container examination is completed within 24 hours.

TECHNICAL DATA

In the Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane CEFS, a six million electron volt (MeV) linear accelerator is used in the x-ray scanning process. The x-ray housing, incorporating linear accelerator, detector array, imaging subsystem and associated electromechanical components, passes across the container on a rail-type system at a rate of 240mm per second. This allows the system to scan a 40 foot container in less than two minutes.



The Fremantle system utilises a 2.5 MeV mobile container x-ray that has a scanning speed of up to 300 mm per second.

The Adelaide facility uses a 2.5 MeV dual view pallet x-ray system and has a scanning speed of up to 400 mm per second. In Adelaide, the container is unpacked and the cargo is put through the x-ray equipment in pallet loads.



Customs x-ray systems leave no residual radiation, and have no effect on food, film or other sensitive goods.

Customs container x-ray systems were manufactured by Nuctech Co Ltd, in Beijing, China. The Adelaide pallet x-ray system was manufactured by Smiths Detection Wiesbaden, Germany.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDUSTRY

CTOs currently provide three days free storage for containers once they are declared available after vessel discharge. Customs logistics arrangements with the CTO and its transport providers require them to provide containers, excluding late reported cargo, to the CEFs with at least 24 hours free storage remaining. Where this is not done, Customs may ask that the storage charges be waived.



Vehicle booking slot times should not be arranged before the cargo is cleared by Customs, as Customs will not be responsible for any charges if the cargo is not available.

RADIATION SAFETY

Since the opening of the first CEF in November 2002, no abnormal radiation-related incidents or accidents have occurred at the CEFs.

For further information, see the *Container Examination Facilities Radiation Safety Fact Sheet*.

INQUIRIES

For further information on CEFs, please see Australian Customs Notices (including ACN No. 2004/33), available at www.customs.gov.au.

Where examination of a container has taken **longer than three days**, the Customs Information and Support Centre (CI&SC) may be contacted 8am - 6pm Monday to Friday by email cargosupport@customs.gov.au or facsimile (02) 8339 6712 or telephone 1300 558 099

Unless there are special circumstances, the CI&SC will not provide information on specific cases within the first three days after cargo is declared available for collection by the CTO. Special circumstances might include sensitive or time-critical goods or specific status messages from Customs. Where clearance is taking longer than three working days, the CI&SC will check on the cause of delay.