



## INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

### **Programmed Cargo Examinations – Managing Unidentified Substances**

**March 2009**

**This Instruction & Guideline refers to Practice Statements: PS 2008/27 –  
Programmed Cargo Examinations Exports and PS 2008/28 – Programmed  
Cargo Examinations Imports.**

**Published date:** 14 April 2009

**Availability:** Internal and External

**Subject:** Procedure for Managing Unidentified Substances

**Purpose:** To provide guidance to staff who locate unidentified  
substances in the course of their duties.

**Owner:** National Manager Cargo Operations South

**Category:** Operational

**Contact:** Director Sea Cargo Operations Victoria

***The electronic version published on the intranet is the current Instruction  
and Guideline.***

## **SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS**

- Officers should be aware of the Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) procedural guidelines in dealing with unidentified substances.
- This instruction & guideline details general procedure relating to (OHS) considerations, Comcare, reporting, Customs Incident Reporting Centre (CIRC) and Employee Assistance Providers (EAP)
- Officers working in a non customs controlled area must follow procedures relevant to that area.

For any imminent threat, contact the Australian Federal Police Protective Services, Australian Federal Police or State / Territory Police.

This Instruction & Guideline applies to staff in Programmed Cargo Examinations

## **INTRODUCTION**

Officers are faced with increasing risks in dealing with potentially dangerous and hazardous substances when examining cargo. While the cargo being examined is subject to risk assessment, there is often no clear-cut method to identify and determine with certainty, the type of goods being dealt with.

The risks that are posed to the border range from:

- Counter Terrorism related threats in terms of nuclear and radio active material and Gases
- Explosives
- Precursor Chemicals
- Hazardous Material
- Narcotics
- Medications, including PIEDS

In dealing with these threats and managing the associated risks, this Instruction and Guideline focuses on officer safety.

There is an obligation upon importers to ensure that goods destined for Australia do not jeopardise the health, safety or wellbeing of the Australian community. If they fail to do this they may be responsible for costs associated with testing, storing and disposing of the goods.

## **INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES**

### **PROCEDURE**

When an unidentified substance is located the examining officer should:

- Assess the area and consider what OHS protection is warranted
- Visually inspect the cargo for identifying labels and HAZMAT labels.

**BCS CLASSIFICATION: TDFC\_Policy**

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- Not attempt to smell, touch, taste or inhale the cargo. Toxic fumes can form when the contents have been sealed.
- Not break any seals.
- Not attempt to deconstruct the cargo.
- Contact the CEF, DDU and Air Cargo for assistance with technologies to test the cargo for narcotics, explosives and/or radioactivity
- Check accompanying documentation for any Materials Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) and handle the cargo accordingly.
- Check for permits,
- Ensure the cargo is safely secured at the depot.
- If warranted, notify the depot supervisor to move the cargo to a dangerous goods area.
- Notify the Cargo Examinations Supervisor that an unidentified substance has been located.

**If the substance remains unidentified:**

- Advise the depot supervisor that the cargo remains unidentified and is to be kept secure and safe
- Advise Environment Protection Australia (EPA) and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) that their assistance is required to try to identify the cargo and keep it safe. (The Fire Brigade has several procedures in place in dealing with unidentified and hazardous substances and also provides assistance with substance containment and isolation.)
- Check for radioactivity using appropriate equipment. (This can be obtained from the CEF and must be conducted by a qualified operator)
- Liaise with the Detector Dog unit and seek the assistance of a Narcotic or FEDD dog to assist.
- Advise the owner (or their representative) that *a competent person*<sup>1</sup> is required to draw a sample and conduct testing and that all costs of sampling, testing and storage will be at the owner's expense.

**After the goods have been identified:**

If the goods:

- are inert and safe to handle, ensure any relevant permits are in force and advise the tasking area accordingly.
- are drugs, pre-cursors or items that could be used for terrorist activities, advise CNOC and senior management **immediately**

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<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth Occupational Health and Safety Regulations define a *competent person*, in relation to a specified task, as a person who:

- (a) Has, through a combination of training, education and experience, acquired knowledge and skills that enable the person to perform correctly that task; and
- (b) Meets any specific requirements imposed by a State or Territory law in relation to undertaking that task (including, for example, a State or Territory law that requires a person to be licensed to undertake the task).

- are dangerous refer them to the appropriate authority (e.g. EPA or MFB) for treatment and handling.

## **Occupational Health & Safety (OHS)**

Customs is committed to maintaining high standards in Occupational Health and Safety. It recognises and accepts its responsibilities and obligations to take all necessary steps to provide a healthy and safe work environment for all its employees.

Workplace safety is the responsibility of every officer. Officers are to wear appropriate OHS personal protection equipment at all times.

Prior to commencing any examination, Officers must assess the working environment and circumstances of each individual tasking to identify factors which may impact on officers personal safety.

Officers should not rely solely on Customs and associated documentation/declarations when determining the contents of a consignment.

Physical deconstruction should not proceed until a full visual assessment of the whole consignment has been completed and where necessary safety issues have been mitigated.

Officers are to handle cargo according to safe lifting guidelines (*OH& S hazard instruction & Guideline – manual Handling*) and where applicable, use team lifting or mechanical devices to prevent injury.

Customs Supervisors and Managers are to ensure that sufficient First Aid trained Officers are available in the workplace.

## **Comcare**

All injuries are to be reported to Human Resources information Service (HRIS), to a supervisor and to Comcare via the *Notification and report of an Incident form*. The Regional OH & S Coordinator should also be informed.

Note that there is a legal reporting timeframe when reporting a Comcare about instances of death, serious injury, incapacity or a dangerous occurrence.

Modifiable workplace incidents are to be reported to Comcare via Facsimile on telephone **1300 305 916**. Timeframes as follows:

Death	- Within 2 hours
Serious Personal Injury	- Within 24 hours
Incapacity greater than 30 days	- Within 24 hours of becoming aware of the duration
Dangerous Occurrence	- Within 24 hours

All hazards are to be reported according to the OH&S Hazard Reporting Process. Specifically, hazards are reported to an immediate supervisor and to the Regional OH&S Coordinator on the *Hazard Report Form* where the hazard cannot be immediately eliminated, or further action is required.

N.B. Failure to comply with the above timeframes is a breach of section 68 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* and regulation 37A of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Safety Arrangements) Regulation 1991*.

### **Customs Incident Reporting Centre (CIRC)**

Any incidents that arise during an examination that have the capacity to interrupt or affect Customs business, including security incidents, must be reported to the Customs Incident Reporting Centre (CIRC) on telephone **1800 303 387**.

### **Employee Assistance Provider (EAP)**

If required, the Customs Employee Assistance Provider (EAP), PPC Worldwide, is available to work with staff involved in a critical incident. Trained counsellors can be deployed to a workplace within 2 hours. PPC Worldwide's contact number is **1300 361 008**, 24 hours – 7 days.

## **RELATED POLICIES AND REFERENCES**

### **PRACTICE STATEMENTS**

Programmed Exams National Practice Statement

OHS Policy – OHS Risk Management – HSMA 2

OHS Policy Guidelines – Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

OHS Policy Guideline – First Aid

### **OTHER INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES**

Air Cargo - Procedures for managing Chemical Hazards in the Workplace

Air Cargo – Procedures for Safe Handling of Unidentified Liquids

Programmed Examinations Detection of Suspected Explosives

Air Cargo – Procedures for Managing Biological Hazards in the Workplace

Air Cargo Detection of Explosives and explosive devices

Air Cargo – Procedures for the Notification and Report of an OH & S Incident

Container Examination Facility – Radiation Detection

Container Examination Facility – Radiation Management Plan

Container Examination Facility – Sampling Procedures

Programmed Exams drawing samples of Asbestos

Air Cargo Managing Radiological Hazards

## **KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Role of the Examining Officer**

The Examining Officer's role is to consider and comply with the procedures outlined above.

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## **Role of the Supervisor**

The supervisor's role is to attempt to identify the cargo. By conducting research and obtaining additional information about the cargo from the tasking area, the broker, freight forwarder or importer.

## **CONSULTATION**

### **External**

Victoria Police – for information about handling pre-cursor chemicals and unidentified substances

Intertek/Probe Analytical Services – for guidelines on dealing with unidentified substances

Environmental Protection Agency - for guidelines on dealing with unidentified and hazardous substances

### **Internal**

Postal Operations

Sea Cargo Operations (CEF)

## **PARTNER AGENCIES**

Nil

## **APPROVAL**

Approved on 2 April 2009 by:

Jaclyne Fisher  
National Director Cargo