

*What Every Member of the  
Trade Community Should Know About:*

# ***Buying and Selling Commissions***



An Advanced Level  
Informed Compliance Publication of the  
U.S. Customs Service

Revised January, 2000

## **NOTICE:**

This publication is intended to provide guidance and information to the trade community. It reflects the Customs Service's position on or interpretation of the applicable laws or regulations as of the date of publication, which is shown on the front cover. It does not in any way replace or supersede those laws or regulations. Only the latest official version of the laws or regulations is authoritative.

### *Publication History*

*First Issued: June, 1996*

*Revised: January, 2000*

## **PRINTING NOTE:**

This publication was designed for electronic distribution via the Customs Electronic Bulletin Board and Customs World Wide Web site (<http://www.customs.gov>) and is being distributed in a variety of formats. It was originally set up in Microsoft Word97<sup>®</sup>. Pagination and margins in downloaded versions may vary depending upon which word processor or printer you use. If you wish to maintain the original settings, you may wish to download the .pdf version, which can then be printed using the freely available Adobe Acrobat Reader<sup>®</sup>.

## PREFACE

On December 8, 1993, Title VI of the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Pub. L. 103-182, 107 Stat. 2057), also known as the Customs Modernization or “Mod” Act, became effective. These provisions amended many sections of the Tariff Act of 1930 and related laws.

Two new concepts that emerge from the Mod Act are “*informed compliance*” and “*shared responsibility*,” which are premised on the idea that in order to maximize voluntary compliance with Customs laws and regulations, the trade community needs to be clearly and completely informed of its legal obligations. Accordingly, the Mod Act imposes a greater obligation on Customs to provide the public with improved information concerning the trade community’s rights and responsibilities under the Customs and related laws. In addition, both the trade and Customs share responsibility for carrying out these requirements. For example, under Section 484 of the Tariff Act as amended (19 U.S.C. §1484), the importer of record is responsible for using reasonable care to enter, classify and determine the value of imported merchandise and to provide any other information necessary to enable Customs to properly assess duties, collect accurate statistics, and determine whether other applicable legal requirements, if any, have been met. The Customs Service is then responsible for fixing the final classification and value of the merchandise. An importer of record’s failure to exercise reasonable care could delay release of the merchandise and, in some cases, could result in the imposition of penalties.

The Office of Regulations and Rulings has been given a major role in meeting Customs informed compliance responsibilities. In order to provide information to the public, Customs has issued a series of informed compliance publications, and videos, on new or revised Customs requirements, regulations or procedures, and a variety of classification and valuation issues.

The Value Branch, International Trade Compliance Division of the Office of Regulations and Rulings has prepared this publication on *Buying and Selling Commissions* as part of a series of informed compliance publications regarding the classification and valuation of imported merchandise. We sincerely hope that this material, together with seminars and increased access to Customs rulings, will help the trade community to improve, as smoothly as possible, voluntary compliance with Customs laws.

The material in this publication is provided for general information purposes only. Because many complicated factors can be involved in customs issues, an importer may wish to obtain a ruling under Customs Regulations, 19 CFR Part 177, or to obtain advice from an expert who specializes in customs matters, for example, a licensed customs broker, attorney or consultant. Reliance solely on the information in this pamphlet may not be considered reasonable care.

Comments and suggestions are welcomed and should be addressed to the Assistant Commissioner at the Office of Regulations and Rulings, U.S. Customs Service, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20229.

Stuart P. Seidel,  
Assistant Commissioner  
Office of Regulations and Rulings

(This page intentionally left blank)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
How is imported merchandise appraised?.....	1
What is transaction value? .....	1
How does the role of an intermediary affect transaction value? .....	1
What is the difference between buying and selling commissions? .....	2
How are buying and selling commissions treated under the TAA?.....	2
When are buying commissions included in transaction value?.....	3
What are some examples of services which are often provided by buying agents? .....	3
When is the intermediary a <i>bona fide</i> buying agent?.....	3
What are some indications that the intermediary is not a <i>bona fide</i> buying agent but rather an independent seller? .....	4
What is the significance of a buying agency agreement or the absence of such an agreement? .....	5
What if the seller and the intermediary are related? .....	5
Who has the burden of proof to establish the existence of a <i>bona fide</i> buying agency? ..	6
How should buying commissions be shown on the commercial documents?.....	6
What documentary evidence is needed to prove the existence of a <i>bona fide</i> buying agency? .....	6
What happens if the importer does not prove the existence of a <i>bona fide</i> buying agency? .....	7
When is the intermediary a selling agent? .....	7
What if the intermediary performs services on behalf of both the buyer and the seller?..	7
Does an importer have an obligation to report commissions to Customs upon entry of the merchandise? .....	8
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION .....	8
The Internet.....	8
Customs Regulations.....	9
Customs Bulletin .....	9
Importing Into the United States.....	9
Video Tapes.....	10
Informed Compliance Publications.....	11
Value Publications .....	12
“Your Comments are Important” .....	13

(This page intentionally left blank)

## INTRODUCTION

When goods are imported into the Customs Territory of the United States (the fifty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), they are subject to certain formalities involving the U.S. Customs Service. In almost all cases, the goods are required to be “entered,” that is, declared to the Customs Service, and are subject to detention and examination by Customs officers to insure compliance with all laws and regulations enforced or administered by the United States Customs Service. As part of the entry process, goods must be “classified” (determined where in the U.S. tariff system they fall) and their value must be determined. Pursuant to the Customs Modernization Act, it is now the responsibility of the importer of record to use “reasonable care” to “enter,” “classify,” and “value” the goods and provide any other information necessary to enable the Customs Service to properly assess duties, collect accurate statistics, and determine whether all other applicable legal requirements are met.

Under the authority of 19 U.S. Code §1500(a), it is Customs responsibility to fix the final appraisement of merchandise in accordance with 19 U.S. Code §1401a. This occurs after the importer of record, using reasonable care, has filed the declared value with the U. S. Customs Service. Customs informed compliance publication *“What Every Member of the Trade Community Should Know About: Customs Value”* (Revised December, 1999) discusses the methods of appraisement used in the United States. This publication concentrates on how commissions paid to intermediaries affect Customs value.

### **How is imported merchandise appraised?**

All merchandise imported into the United States is subject to appraisement. The Trade Agreements Act of 1979 (“TAA”) sets forth the rules for appraisement of imported merchandise. The preferred method of appraisement under the TAA is **transaction value**.

### **What is transaction value?**

The transaction value of imported merchandise is the price actually paid or payable for merchandise when sold for exportation to the United States, plus certain statutorily enumerated additions. For further information see the informed compliance publication *“What Every Member of the Trade Community Should Know About: Customs Value”* (Revised December, 1999).

### **How does the role of an intermediary affect transaction value?**

Many import transactions involve a party (or parties) who is neither the seller nor the buyer but an intermediary who assists either the buyer or seller in the purchase or sale of the imported merchandise. Identifying the role of the intermediary is important in determining the transaction value of the imported merchandise. An intermediary may

function as either a buying or selling agent or as an independent buyer/seller. When the intermediary is functioning as an agent, the actual sale is between the foreign seller and the buyer with the agent acting as a facilitator. In such case, the issue to be decided is whether the commissions the agent receives for its services are part of the transaction value of the imported merchandise. This informed compliance publication explains the differences between buying and selling agents, buying and selling commissions, and the ramifications of each for appraisement purposes.

When the intermediary is functioning as an independent buyer/seller, the issue to be decided is which sale is the sale for exportation for purposes of transaction value (the sale between the manufacturer/seller and the intermediary or the sale between the intermediary and the importer/buyer). The criteria used to determine whether the intermediary is functioning as an independent buyer/seller and if so, which is the sale for exportation is the subject of the informed compliance publication, *“What Every Member of the Trade Community Should Know About: Bona Fide Sales and Sales for Exportation”*.

### **What is the difference between buying and selling commissions?**

In legal terms, in an agency relationship, one party is called the agent and the other party, the principal. An agent is a person who performs actions on behalf of the principal. The fees the agent receives for its services are called commissions. Typically, the commission is equal to an agreed upon percentage of the price of the goods. In a buying agency, the principal is the buyer and in a selling agency, the principal is the seller. Buying commissions are fees paid to a *bona fide* buying agent for the services it performs on behalf of the buyer in connection with the purchase of the imported goods. Selling commissions are fees paid to a selling agent for the services it performs on behalf of the seller in the sale of the imported goods. It is important to note that when the intermediary is acting as an agent, it is not the actual buyer or the actual seller of the imported goods but rather, a party who is performing services on behalf of either the buyer or the seller.

### **How are buying and selling commissions treated under the TAA?**

Selling commissions incurred by the buyer with respect to the imported merchandise are one of the specified additions to the price actually paid or payable. An addition is to be made for such selling commissions unless they are already included in the price. (For example, if the seller pays its agent a commission and includes this amount in the price it charges the buyer for the imported goods, no addition is made for the selling commission since it is already included in the price). Selling commissions incurred by the buyer with respect to the imported merchandise are included in the transaction value either as part of the price actually paid or payable or as an addition thereto.

Buying commissions are not one of the specified additions to the price actually paid or payable. Therefore, no addition is made for *bona fide* buying commissions incurred by the buyer (that is, commissions paid to a *bona fide buying agent* who meets

the criteria discussed in this publication). Except as noted below, *bona fide* buying commissions are not included in the transaction value of the imported merchandise.

### **When are buying commissions included in transaction value?**

Buying commissions are included in the transaction value of the imported merchandise when they are part of the total payment made by the buyer to the seller. This is because the TAA does not authorize any deductions from the price actually paid or payable for buying commissions. (Example, the manufacturer bills the importer \$100 for the imported merchandise and the importer pays this amount to the manufacturer. This price includes a \$5 buying commission which the manufacturer will pay to the buying agent upon receipt of the \$100 payment from the importer. Even if Customs is satisfied that the intermediary is a *bona fide* buying agent, the total payment made by the buyer to the seller is \$100 and no subtraction would be made for commissions the buying agent receives).

### **What are some examples of services which are often provided by buying agents?**

Examples of services which are characteristic of those rendered by a buying agent include compiling market information, gathering samples, translating, informing the seller of the desires of the buyer, locating suppliers, placing orders based on the buyer's instructions, procuring the merchandise, assisting in factory negotiation, inspecting and packing merchandise, and arranging for shipment and payment. This is not an exhaustive list.

### **When is the intermediary a *bona fide* buying agent?**

The courts have said that no single factor is determinative. Whether a person is a *bona fide* buying agent depends upon the all the relevant facts of each case and the totality of the evidence. The fact that a person is called a buying agent does not mean that he/she is in fact a *bona fide* buying agent. Also, the fact that a person enters into a buying agency agreement with the buyer does not mean that such person is a *bona fide* buying agent. Having authority to act as a *bona fide* buying agent is not the same as actually performing as one. What needs to be considered is whether the services actually performed by the agent is what the parties agreed to and whether such actions are consistent with a *bona fide* buying agency.

In order to be considered a *bona fide* buying agent, the purported agent must be acting on behalf of and primarily for the benefit of the buyer, rather than for the seller or himself/herself. The main factor which determines whether a party is a *bona fide* buying agent is the right of the buyer to control the agent's conduct with respect to those matters entrusted to the agent. The buyer should control the purchasing process and the buying agent should take directions from the buyer and act upon the buyer's instructions. For example, a buying agent usually does not control who the manufacturer is or what is to be purchased. Normally, the buyer makes such decisions

and the buying agent carries them out. Also, a buying agent usually does not control the manner of payment and other significant aspects of the purchase. While a buying agent may exercise some discretion, the ultimate purchasing decisions should be made by the buyer and not by the buyer's agent. The more discretion the purported agent has, the less likely it is that such person is a *bona fide* buying agent.

Some factors considered by the courts which go to the main issue of "control" are:

1. which party bears the risk of loss for lost or damaged merchandise? (generally, a buying agent does not bear the risk of loss);
2. who absorbs the cost of shipping and handling? (buying agents generally do not absorb such costs);
3. which party controls the manner of payment for the goods? (generally, a buying agent would not control how and when the seller is paid);
4. could the buyer purchase from the manufacturers without using the services of the agent (if the answer is no, the agent may be a selling agent);
5. was the intermediary operating an independent business primarily for its own benefit? (if the answer is yes, it is possible that the intermediary is not an agent but an independent seller);
6. is the intermediary financially detached from the manufacturer or seller? (if not, it is possible that the intermediary may not be acting on behalf of the buyer, but on behalf of the seller);
7. what do the commercial documents show? (e.g., how are the parties referred to in the commercial documents; is there a buying agency agreement; is there a purchase agreement and if so, who are the parties thereto).

In many cases, a written buying agency agreement is entered into between the buyer and the buying agent which outlines the responsibilities of each party and sets forth the amount of commissions that are to be paid. In such case, the terms of the agreement should be reviewed to see whether they are consistent with a buying agency and whether the purported agent is actually performing the functions as provided in the agreement.

The totality of the evidence must be examined in order to determine whether there is a *bona fide* buying agency. The bottom line: does the evidence prove that the buyer is the party in control and that the purported agent is working for the buyer and not the seller or himself/herself?

### **What are some indications that the intermediary is not a *bona fide* buying agent but rather an independent seller?**

In some cases an intermediary may not be functioning as an agent at all, but rather as an independent buyer/seller. In such case, the amount that is referred to as the buying commission may actually be the intermediary's mark-up or profit which would constitute part of the total price paid by the buyer and part of transaction value. Some indications would be that the intermediary operates an independent business primarily

for its own benefit, that it has unlimited discretion regarding the purchase of the goods from the seller, that the purported buyer and seller have no direct contact, and that the intermediary obtains title to the goods. For further discussion, see Informed Compliance Publication “*What Every Member of the Trade Community Should Know About: Bona Fide Sales and Sales for Exportation*”.

### **What is the significance of a buying agency agreement or the absence of such an agreement?**

A written buying agency agreement which sets forth the obligations of the buyer and agent is evidence of the buying agency. However, it is not determinative. While the agreement is important, it is more important to consider whether the parties are actually doing what they agreed to do. For example, the fact that the agreement indicates that the agent must obtain the buyer’s written approval before entering into an agreement with the seller is meaningless if the purported agent never obtains the buyer’s written approval. Also, the fact that the agreement indicates that the buyer will be responsible for selecting the manufacturer is meaningless if the purported agent selects the manufacturer. Where the actions of the parties indicate that the buyer maintains little or no control over the agent, there is no *bona fide* buying agency relationship, even if the agreement provides otherwise.

The absence of a buying agency agreement does not necessarily preclude the existence of a *bona fide* buying agency relationship. However, it will be very difficult to establish one without it.

### **What if the seller and the intermediary are related?**

Since a buying agent is supposed to be acting on behalf of the buyer and in the best interests of the buyer, it is more difficult to show that the intermediary is a *bona fide* buying agent when it is related to the seller. The courts have said that while a relationship between the buying agent and the seller does not preclude the existence of a buying agency, the circumstances surrounding such transactions are subject to closer scrutiny. One factor that Customs has looked at in these cases is whether the purported agent always obtains the imported merchandise from the related seller or whether it also regularly uses unrelated sellers. If the purported buying agent obtains the imported merchandise only from its related seller, it will be difficult for the importer to show that the agent is acting in the best interests of and under the direction and control of the buyer and a finding of a *bona fide* buying agency is unlikely. Another relevant factor when the seller and the intermediary are related is whether any of the commissions paid by the buyer inure to the benefit of the seller. If they do, this would not be consistent with a *bona fide* buying agency relationship.

## **Who has the burden of proof to establish the existence of a *bona fide* buying agency?**

The importer has the burden of proving the existence of a *bona fide* buying agency relationship. Absent sufficient proof, commissions paid by the importer will be included in the transaction value of the imported merchandise.

## **How should buying commissions be shown on the commercial documents?**

There is no one invoicing method that must be used with regard to buying commissions. However, the method used (along with the method of payment) can either facilitate a determination of non-dutiable buying commissions or make such a finding more difficult. The method of invoicing and the method of payment is part of the total evidence that must be considered before a determination can be made regarding the status of so-called buying commissions. For example, the easiest way to show that the middleman is not a seller and that the payments to the middleman represent buying commissions is for the seller to invoice the buyer for the purchase price of the imported merchandise and for the middleman to invoice the buyer separately for its commissions. The buyer would then pay the seller for the goods and separately pay the middleman for its services. This method clearly shows the price paid for the imported merchandise and the amount of the commission.

## **What documentary evidence is needed to prove the existence of a *bona fide* buying agency?**

Before an importer declares the commissions as non-dutiable buying commissions, the importer should be satisfied that the totality of the evidence demonstrates that the purported agent is a *bona fide* buying agent and not a selling agent nor an independent seller. The importer should be prepared to submit evidence which proves its claim. At a minimum, an invoice or other documentation from the seller, showing who the seller is, and establishing the price actually paid or payable for the imported goods must be submitted at the time of entry or upon demand by Customs if not requested at the time of entry. Any buying commissions should be shown separately from the price actually paid or payable for the imported merchandise. Any written buying agency agreement, invoices pertaining to the payment of buying commissions and other evidence of the buying agency should be submitted at the time of entry or upon request by Customs. The final determination of whether the commissions paid are *bona fide* buying commissions is made by Customs based on the documentation submitted.

## **What happens if the importer does not prove the existence of a *bona fide* buying agency?**

Where an intermediary is involved in the import transaction and the importer cannot establish its role as a *bona fide* buying agent, depending on the facts presented, the intermediary will be considered either a selling agent or an independent seller. An importer who declares commissions as non-dutiable buying commissions without the evidence to back up its claim would not be exercising reasonable care and may be subject to penalty or other enforcement compliance action.

## **When is the intermediary a selling agent?**

The same agency principles applicable to buying agents also apply to selling agents. However, in a selling agency, the principal is the seller. A selling agent represents the interests of the seller, rather than the buyer, in the sale of the imported merchandise. A selling agent may seek customers, collect orders, or otherwise assist the seller in the sale of the imported merchandise. In the case of a selling agency, the seller controls the actions of the selling agent with respect to those matters entrusted to the agent. For example, an importer may arrange for the purchase and importation of the merchandise with the seller's agent, rather than the seller. A selling agent could negotiate with the importer, on behalf of the seller, concerning the sale of the imported goods. However, it is the seller, and not its agent, who has the ultimate authority with respect to the sale of the goods. If the intermediary has complete discretion regarding the sale of the goods, and/or obtains title and ownership from the seller, the intermediary would be considered an independent buyer/seller and not a selling agent.

When the intermediary and the seller are related, close scrutiny is required in ascertaining whether the intermediary is a *bona fide* buying agent or a selling agent. When the intermediary always obtains imported merchandise from its related sellers, it is likely that the intermediary is actually a selling agent. A similar result would be reached if any or all of the commissions paid by the buyer inure to the benefit of the seller.

Unless already included in the price, all selling commissions incurred by the buyer with respect to the imported merchandise are to be added to the price actually paid or payable for those goods.

## **What if the intermediary performs services on behalf of both the buyer and the seller?**

Since a buying agent is supposed to be acting on behalf of the buyer and in the best interests of the buyer, it is more difficult to show that the intermediary is a *bona fide* buying agent when it is also performing services on behalf of the seller. While this fact does not automatically preclude the intermediary from being considered a *bona fide* buying agent, it will require closer scrutiny of the transaction. A *bona fide* buying

agency relationship is not precluded if the services performed by the intermediary are primarily for the benefit of the buyer, the services provided the seller are limited in scope, and the intermediary informs the buyer about the nature of the services to be performed for the seller and the amount of compensation to be received.

### **Does an importer have an obligation to report commissions to Customs upon entry of the merchandise?**

Yes. The importer is required to sign a declaration on the Customs Form 7501 submitted at the time of entry, which indicates among other things, that the submitted invoices include commissions. In this regard, 19 U.S.C. §1481, as amended, specifies that all invoices of merchandise to be imported into the United States and any electronic equivalent thereof shall prescribe, among other things, all charges upon the merchandise, including commissions. In addition, 19 U.S.C. §1481 requires the furnishing of any other facts deemed necessary to a proper appraisal of the merchandise. 19 U.S.C. §1484, as amended, provides that an importer shall, using reasonable care complete the entry by filing with the Customs Service the declared value, ... and such other documentation or, pursuant to an electronic data interchange system, such other information as is necessary to enable the Customs Service to properly assess duties on the merchandise. This would include sufficient information to enable Customs to determine whether any commissions were paid by the buyer in connection with the imported merchandise and if so, whether they are buying or selling commissions. Therefore, invoices relating to the payment of the imported merchandise and the payment of commissions (both buying and selling commissions) and other relevant information discussed above should be provided to Customs. An importer who fails to declare commissions would not be exercising reasonable care and may be subject to penalty or other enforcement compliance action.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **The Internet**

The U. S. Customs Service's home page on the Internet's World Wide Web, provides the trade community with current, relevant information regarding Customs operations and items of special interest. The site posts information -- which includes proposed regulations, news releases, Customs publications and notices, etc. -- that can be searched, read on-line, printed or downloaded to your person computer. The web site was established as a trade-friendly mechanism to assist the importing and exporting community. The web site links to the Customs Electronic Bulletin Board (CEBB), an older electronic system on which Customs notices and drafts were posted. After December, 1999 the CEBB will be only accessible through the web site. The web site also links to the home pages of many other agencies whose importing or exporting regulations Customs helps to enforce. Customs web site also contains a wealth of information of interest to a broader public than the trade community -- to international travelers, for example.

The Customs Service's web address is <http://www.customs.gov>.

## Customs Regulations

The current edition of *Customs Regulations of the United States* is a loose-leaf, subscription publication available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; telephone 202-512-1800. A bound, 1999 edition of Title 19, *Code of Federal Regulations*, which incorporates all changes to the Customs Regulations from April 1998 through March 1999, is also available for sale from the same address. All proposed and final regulations are published in the *Federal Register*, which is published daily by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, and distributed by the Superintendent of Documents. Information about on-line access to the *Federal Register* may be obtained by calling (202) 512-1530 between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Eastern time. These notices are also published in the weekly *Customs Bulletin*, described below.

## Customs Bulletin

The *Customs Bulletin and Decisions* ("*Customs Bulletin*") is a weekly publication that contains decisions, rulings, regulatory proposals, notices and other information of interest to the trade community. It also contains decisions issued by the U.S. Court of International Trade, as well as Customs-related decisions of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Each year, the Government Printing Office publishes bound volumes of the Customs Bulletin. Subscriptions may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents at the address and phone number listed above.

## Importing Into the United States

This publication provides an overview of the importing process and contains general information about import requirements. The 1998 edition of *Importing Into the United States* contains much new and revised material brought about pursuant to the Customs Modernization Act ("Mod Act"). The Mod Act has fundamentally altered the relationship between importers and the Customs Service by shifting to the importer the legal responsibility for declaring the value, classification, and rate of duty applicable to entered merchandise.

The 1998 edition contains a new section entitled "Informed Compliance." A key component of informed compliance is the shared responsibility between Customs and the import community, wherein Customs communicates its requirements to the importer, and the importer, in turn, uses reasonable care to assure that Customs is provided accurate and timely data pertaining to his or her importations.

Single copies may be obtained from local Customs offices or from the Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Customs Service, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20229. An on-line version is available at the Customs web site. *Importing Into the United States* is also available for sale, in single copies or bulk orders, from the Superintendent of Documents by calling (202) 512-1800, or by mail from the

Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15250-7054.

## Video Tapes

The Customs Service has prepared a series of video tapes in VHS format for the trade community and other members of the public. As of the date of this publication, four tapes are available and are described below.

If you would like more information on any of the tapes described below, or if you would like to order them, please send a written request to: U.S. Customs Service, Office of Regulations and Rulings, Suite 3.4A, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20229, Attn: Operational Oversight Division. Orders must be accompanied by a *check or money order drawn on a U.S. financial institution* and made payable to U.S. Customs Service. Prices include postage.

- *Rules of Origin for Textiles and Apparel Products* is a two-hour tape aimed at increasing understanding of the new rules, which became effective July 1, 1996. Copies of this tape are available from many trade organizations, customs brokers, consultants and law firms, or it can be ordered from the U.S. Customs Service for \$20.00.
- *Customs Compliance: Why You Should Care* is a 30-minute tape divided into two parts. Part I, almost 18 minutes in length, is designed to provide senior executives and others in the importing or exporting business with an overview of the significant features of the Customs Modernization Act and the reasons to adopt new strategies in order to minimize legal exposure under the Act.

Part II is intended primarily for import/export compliance officers, legal departments and company officers. About 12 minutes long, Part II explains why Customs and the trade can benefit from sharing responsibilities under Customs laws. It also provides viewers with legal detail on record keeping, potential penalties for noncompliance, and on the Customs prior-disclosure program. The cost is \$15.00.

- *Account Management: Team Building for World Trade*, a 13-½-minute tape on account management, discusses what account management is and why there is a need for it. Account Management is a new approach to working with the trade in which a company is treated as an account, rather than being dealt with on a transaction by transaction basis. The tape includes discussions with Customs account managers and representatives of importers (“accounts”) relating to the benefits of account management from the perspectives of the both the Customs Service and the trade community. The cost is \$15.00.
- *General-Order Warehousing: Rules for Handling Unclaimed Merchandise*, 90 minutes long, was prepared jointly by the Customs Service and the trade

community on the subject of general-order merchandise (unclaimed goods). The tape includes question and answer discussions that define procedures required to implement the new general-order laws and regulations and why there is a need to have effective procedures for handling unclaimed goods. The cost is \$15.00.

## Informed Compliance Publications

The U. S. Customs Service has prepared a number of Informed Compliance publications in the "*What Every Member of the Trade Community Should Know About*": series. As of the date of this publication, the subjects listed below were available.

- <sup>4</sup> 1. Customs Value (15/96, <sup>4</sup>Revised 12/99)
- <sup>1</sup> 2. Raw Cotton: Tariff Classification and Import Quotas (5/13/96)
- <sup>1</sup> 3. NAFTA for Textiles & Textile Articles (5/14/96)
- 4. Buying & Selling Commissions (16/96, Revised 1/2000)
- <sup>1</sup> 5. Fibers & Yarn (8/96)
- <sup>3</sup> 6. Textile & Apparel Rules of Origin (10/96, Revised 11/98)
- <sup>1</sup> 7. Mushrooms (10/96)
- <sup>1</sup> 8. Marble (11/96)
- <sup>1</sup> 9. Peanuts (11/96)
- 10. Bona Fide Sales & Sales for Exportation (11/96, Revised 1/2000)
- <sup>2</sup> 11. Caviar (2/97)
- <sup>2</sup> 12. Granite (2/97)
- <sup>2</sup> 13. Distinguishing Bolts from Screws (5/97)
- <sup>2</sup> 14. Internal Combustion Piston Engines (5/97)
- <sup>2</sup> 15. Vehicles, Parts and Accessories (5/97)
- <sup>2</sup> 16. Articles of Wax, Artificial Stone and Jewelry (8/97)
- <sup>2</sup> 17. Tariff Classification (11/97)
- <sup>2</sup> 18. Classification of Festive Articles (11/97)
- <sup>3</sup> 19. Ribbons & Trimmings (1/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 20. Agriculture Actual Use (1/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 21. Reasonable Care (1/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 22. Footwear (1/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 23. Drawback (3/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 24. Lamps, Lighting and Candle Holders (3/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 25. NAFTA Eligibility and Building Stone (3/98, Revised 12/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 26. Rules of Origin (5/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 27. Records and Recordkeeping Requirements (6/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 28. ABC's of Prior Disclosure (6/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 29. Gloves, Mittens and Mitts (6/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 30. Waste & Scrap under Chapter 81 (6/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 31. Tableware, Kitchenware, Other Household Articles and Toilet Articles of Plastics (11/98)
- <sup>3</sup> 32. Textile & Apparel Rules of Origin Index of Rulings (11/98)
- <sup>4</sup> 33. Knit to Shape Apparel Products (1/99)

- <sup>4</sup> 34. Hats and Other Headgear (under HTSUS 6505) (3/99)
- <sup>4</sup> 35. Customs Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (6/99)
- <sup>4</sup> 36. Classification of Children's Apparel (6/99)
- <sup>4</sup> 37. Accreditation of Laboratories and Gaugers (9/99)
- <sup>4</sup> 38. Classification of Sets (9/99)
- <sup>4</sup> 39. Marking Requirements for Wearing Apparel (9/99)
- <sup>4</sup> 40. Fiber Trade Names & Generic Terms (11/99)
- <sup>4</sup> 41. NAFTA Country of Origin Rules for Monumental & Building Stone (12/99)
- 42. Diodes, Transistors & Similar Semiconductor Devices (1/2000)
- 43. Soldering and Welding Machines and Apparatus (1/2000)
- 44. Cane and Beet Sugar (Quota, Classification & Entry) (1/2000)

■ indicates publications which are, or will be, available for downloading from the Customs Electronic Bulletin Board or through Customs Home Page on the Internet: <http://www.customs.gov>;

<sup>1</sup> denotes reprinted in *30/31 Customs Bulletin No.50/1*, January 2, 1997;

<sup>2</sup> denotes reprinted in *32 Customs Bulletin No.2/3*, January 21, 1998;

<sup>3</sup> denotes reprinted in *32 Customs Bulletin No. 51*, December 23, 1998.

<sup>4</sup>denotes reprinted in *33 Customs Bulletin No. 51*, December 22, 1999

Check the Customs Electronic Bulletin Board and the Customs Internet website for more recent publications.

## Value Publications

*Customs Valuation under the Trade Agreements Act of 1979* is a 96-page book containing a detailed narrative description of the customs valuation system, the customs valuation title of the Trade Agreements Act (§402 of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended by the Trade Agreements Act of 1979 (19 U.S.C. §1401a)), the Statement of Administrative Action which was sent to the U.S. Congress in conjunction with the TAA, regulations (19 CFR §§152.000-152.108) implementing the valuation system (a few sections of the regulations have been amended subsequent to the publication of the book) and questions and answers concerning the valuation system. A copy may be obtained from the U.S. Customs Service, Office of Regulations and Rulings, Value Branch, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20229.

*Customs Valuation Encyclopedia* (with updates) is comprised of relevant statutory provisions, Customs Regulations implementing the statute, portions of the Customs Valuation Code, judicial precedent, and administrative rulings involving application of valuation law. A copy may be purchased for a nominal charge from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15250-7054. This publication is also available on the Customs Service Internet website.

The information provided in this publication is for general information purposes only. Recognizing that many complicated factors may be involved in customs issues, an importer may wish to obtain a ruling under Customs Regulations, 19 CFR Part 177, or obtain advice from an expert (such as a licensed Customs Broker, attorney or consultant) who specializes in Customs matters. Reliance solely on the general information in this pamphlet may not be considered reasonable care.

Additional information may be also be obtained from Customs ports of entry. Please consult your telephone directory for a Customs office near you. The listing will be found under U.S. Government, Treasury Department.

### **“Your Comments are Important”**

The Small Business and Regulatory Enforcement Ombudsman and 10 regional Fairness Boards were established to receive comments from small businesses about federal agency enforcement activities and rate each agency’s responsiveness to small business. If you wish to comment on the enforcement actions of U.S. Customs, call 1-888-REG-FAIR (1-888-734-3247).

### **REPORT SMUGGLING 1-800-BE-ALERT**



**Visit our Internet website: <http://www.customs.gov>**