

September 25, 2025

US Customs Border Protection and Canadian Border Services Agency ***Enforcement of Vague Commodity Descriptions In Inbound Manifest***

Dear Valued ONE Customer,

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (US CBP) and the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) have long-standing regulations concerning manifest commodity descriptions. These regulations require a precise or specific description of the merchandise regardless of value. The description should be in plain language and detailed enough for a customs officer to identify the commodity's size, shape, and characteristics.

In the past year, US CBP and CBSA have begun intensive manual auditing of import manifest data to find BLs with insufficient commodity descriptions. Both agencies have also begun to issue penalties for these manifest violations.

Additionally, the US CBP is taking a more aggressive enforcement approach and has developed system changes to improve the accuracy of its audit of import manifest data. The ETA for deploying these changes is September 27, 2025.

To ensure that your shipment data complies with US CBP and CBSA regulatory requirements, customers are advised to follow these guidelines:

- **Be specific** — Avoid general terms like "foodstuffs," "electronics", or "clothing". A specific description is necessary for customs officials to identify the cargo's characteristics correctly.
 - For example, instead of "electronic goods," use "computers", "DVD players", or "video game consoles".
 - **Include the brand and model (if applicable)** — For branded items, include the brand and model number in addition to the generic description.
 - For example, instead of "laundry detergent", use "Bubbles Brand Laundry Detergent".
 - **Use plain language** — Descriptions should be clear and concise, omitting marketing terms or product codes that are not universally understood.
 - **Exclude extraneous information** — Do not include irrelevant details such as the type of packaging, quantity (unless specified as a description requirement), or carrier disclaimers in the commodity description field.
 - **State if the cargo is "used"** — Please indicate in the description whether the shipment contains used goods; otherwise, it is assumed to be new.
 - **Provide a Harmonized System (HS/HTS) code** — Include your product's appropriate HS/HTS code (6-digit minimum). This classification code is required for customs and helps with proper categorization.
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ONE will transmit the information supplied in the shipping instructions; however, vague or false descriptions can lead to the following:

- Shipment rejection and delays: Customs agencies will reject submissions with inadequate descriptions and hold shipments until correct information is provided.
- Fines and penalties: Violation of customs regulations can result in penalty assessment.
- Cargo seizure: In severe cases (particularly involving fraud), customs authorities may seize the cargo.
- Safety risks: Incorrectly declared hazardous or oversized cargo can be a serious safety risk to the carrier, crew, and other goods on board.

Please refer to the links below for additional information about acceptable/unacceptable cargo descriptions for the US CBP and reporting requirements for CBSA.

[U.S. Customs and Border Protection Examples of Unacceptable vs Acceptable Cargo Descriptions](#)

[Canada Border Services Agency Commercial Reporting Requirements: Detailed Commodity Descriptions](#)

Sincerely,
Ocean Network Express (North America) Inc.
