
HAITI CUSTOMS PROCEDURES for IMPORTATION 21 February 2010 v.2

The following updated information on the Customs process of importing humanitarian aid into Haiti was obtained from a Customs Broker. Although all efforts have been made to ensure the content of this brief is accurate, it is always recommended to seek the direct advice of the Customs Administration and other Government departments for up-to-date information. Amendments to this brief will be made as new information becomes available.

Note: It is important to realize that there are always two components to importing humanitarian goods: Obtaining a Duty and Tax Exemption **AND** Customs Clearance.

General Information

- Due to the earthquake, the main Customs Office has relocated. It is no longer located in the centre of town but in the Customs Building located near the Port au Prince Port (APN).

Registration

- In order for an organization to qualify for a duty and tax exemption on the importation of goods into Haiti, they *normally* must first be a registered entity within the country. This is done at the Ministry of Planification for NGOs and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for UN organizations.
- **Note:** It has been reported that the Ministry of Planification is not fully operational and, under normal circumstances, it takes 1-2 months for an organization to register. As such, according to recent changes in the Customs procedures, organizations who are not currently registered in the country may be able to seek the assistance of the Direction de la Protection Civile (DPC) in clearing their goods. However, in some cases, they might prefer to decide on distribution/allocation - prior discussion is needed with them.
- If an organization is currently registered in the country, they should **not** be clearing their goods via the DPC but via a Customs Broker.

Duty and Tax Exemption

- Once registered, in order to qualify for subsequent duty and tax exemptions on the importation of goods, all organizations (NGO and UN) must first present themselves to the Direction Generale de Impots (DGI) and make an application for a "Quitus Fiscal". This document must be renewed quarterly and is certification from the tax authority that the organization is in good financial standing with the Government.

- Afterwards, organizations must present themselves to the Ministry of Finance main office and make an application for a Demande de Franchise Authorization. This Authorization will allow an organization to submit a Demande de Franchise upon importing items into the country. It usually takes approximately 2 days to obtain this authorization.

Importing Goods

- In order to import humanitarian goods (particularly vehicles) into Haiti, the minimum required documents for Customs purposes include the following:
 - Declaration Form (Cost of the form is approximately USD\$1)
 - Packing List
 - Bill of Lading/Airway Bill
 - Freight Certificate
 - Declaration of Value or Invoice
 - Gift Certificate (if applicable)
 - Vehicle Title (if applicable)
 - Certificate of Origin (if applicable)
 - Phyto-sanitary Certificate (if applicable)

Note: These documents must be **ORIGINALS**, often even stating 'ORIGINAL' on the document. "Non-Negotiable" documents, even if they are signed, are not considered originals and are not sufficient.

It is preferable, however, to obtain copies of the needed documents in advance of the arrival of the goods as, with a Customs Broker, the process can be started with copies. Originals will have to follow shortly after arrival or penalties will be incurred.

If importing by road, the process should be done in advance to minimize delays at the border (more detailed information on land border entry is currently being sought).

- Once the Customs required documents are collected, the following two additional documents are also needed in order to apply for and avail of a duty and tax exemption on the imported goods. All of them together must be first submitted to the Ministry of Finance (MoF).
 - Quitus Fiscale
 - Demande de Franchise Application

The MoF will review the claim/file, verify the Quitus Fiscale and certify the Demande de Franchise against the earlier-mentioned authorization (see bullet point 3).

- The Ministry of Finance will then forward all documentation to the Customs Administration for final clearance.

Processing Time

- For many items, once a direct and formal declaration is made to Customs the goods can be immediately released and the process either minimized, waived or done retroactively.
- With other items such as vehicles, the above process must be carried out in its entirety. The normal processing time for vehicles can be up to 14 days. However, with a certified Customs Broker or the DPC, a vehicle may be cleared in less time, sometimes between 1-3 days. Brokers and the DPC are accustomed to the normal practices and, as they are known to the Government, are able to have their applications expedited.
- Importing vehicles by road may often take a longer period of time than importing by sea or by air into Port au Prince. This is due to the fact that the main Customs office that does the processing is located in Port au Prince and all clearances must be obtained from there. During the process, they may also wish to inspect the goods which can be done in a timely manner if the goods are in the Capital.
- In the event that commodities need to be cleared in an *exceptionally* urgent manner, there is a Cellule D'Urgence office located in the Customs Building. A broker/organization may be able to avail of their services or present their case directly to the Director General of Customs.

Customs Brokers

- The following Customs Brokers may be able to assist organizations with their customs clearance:

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Tel: 2513 3690

Harry Andre
Tel: 3466 9240

Yves Andre
Tel: 3704 9475

Jean Audie Souffrant
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