

INTERNATIONAL MAIL IMPORTS

Customs Inspections of Mailed Parcels

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Mail parcels must meet United States and international postal requirements regarding weight, size, and measurement.

All mail is subject to Customs examination

The United States Customs territory consists of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In general, all mail originating outside United States Customs territory that is to be delivered inside U.S. Customs territory is subject to Customs examination. Mail arriving from outside the U.S. Virgin Islands that is to be delivered inside the U.S. Virgin Islands is also subject to Customs examination.

Mail entering the United States from abroad arrives first at the U.S. Postal Service. The Postal Service then sends packages to U.S. Customs for examination and to assess duty, if indeed any is owed. Customs processing is required for civilian parcels as well as for those sent from overseas military postal facilities (APO/FPO).

Sending international packages from abroad

Mailing vs. shipping

Although many travelers use the terms *shipping* and *mailing* interchangeably, they are not the same, especially not where clearing Customs is concerned. *Mailing* is always via the international postal system, which is run jointly by international governments. *Shipping*, on the other hand, refers to private-sector couriers, those commercial delivery services that often promise to deliver packages in record time. Commercial delivery services usually use customs brokers or other agents to clear your merchandise through Customs, which is a service you pay for in addition to the charge for shipping and any duty or processing fees owed to the Customs Service. (Customs brokers are not employees of the U.S. Customs Service.)

If you mail your goods through the Postal Service, the only fees you may have to pay are a postal service handling fee and, if duty is owed on your package, a Customs handling fee. You also have the option to protest a duty determination – before duty is paid, rather than after – as would be your situation if a courier service was handling your packages.

Here's an example of how *mailing* vs. *shipping* can affect a package: Say you're shipping used personal goods back to the United States. Even though a commercial delivery service may require you to provide a complete description of the goods you are sending, that service's customs broker may not make a distinction between new and used goods when clearing goods through Customs and will automatically pay whatever duty would be owed if the item was new. They, in turn, will bill you for reimbursement. Thus, you could be asked to pay duty on something you already owned that you are sending back to the United States.

In order to avoid paying the duty, you will have to ask the courier service's broker to protest the duty payment with Customs, and they may charge you again for that service. In any event, Customs recommends that if your goods are "used personal goods returned," you indicate this on the outside of the package since this can significantly reduce the amount of duty, if any at all, that you are charged for the shipment.

You should also be aware that because different clearance procedures and regulations may apply to mailed vs. commercially shipped packages, the information and guidance in this brochure apply only to goods entering the United States by way of the international mail system, and not to those shipped by commercial delivery services.

Warning

If you misrepresent the nature of the goods you are sending back to the United States, whether by mail or commercial carrier, you may be liable for a penalty as well as any duty that might be owed on your merchandise. In addition, those goods could be subject to seizure.

Purchases sent by a merchant abroad

The merchant will attach an international customs declaration to your package, which he or she should fill out with a complete, accurate description of the parcel's contents and value. The merchant will then mail or ship the package to the address you supply.

Although the merchant may charge you for the cost of mailing or shipping your package, he should not charge you for U.S. Customs duties. Customs duties are not assessed until a package arrives in the United States, and they cannot be paid in advance. If a merchant tells you that you must prepay duty, do not believe him or her. The Postal Service in the United States will collect any duty owed from the recipient; in fact, by law, only the designated recipient (addressee) is liable for duty. The shipment's originator—the merchant, for example—will not be charged duty for goods that he or she has sent to the United States.

Goods sent by the traveler or resident of a foreign country

When you take your package to a foreign post office, the postal clerk will give you an international customs declaration. Be sure to fill it out with a full, accurate description of the goods inside and attach it to the parcel's exterior. By international treaty, all foreign post offices will have this form. In the very unlikely case that one isn't available, simply write the description and value on the outer wrapping of the package itself.

If the item is intended as a gift, write "unsolicited gift" on the outer wrapper. If the package contains your own used belongings, mark the package "personal goods returned." If the package contains new purchases you bought for your own use, mark it "personal purchases."

Importance of clear and complete declarations

Customs officers must do time-consuming, intrusive examinations of packages that lack readily accessible, easy-to-read information about the merchandise inside. Lack of clear, concise declarations could delay your package's arrival.

Getting packages from abroad

As stated earlier, when a package first enters the United States, it arrives at a post office near the addressee. That Post Office will route it to one of 13 Customs international mail facilities, where Customs inspectors will determine whether duty is owed. Customs then returns the package to the Postal Service for delivery (unless the value of the package is over \$2000, in which case the package will be held by Customs until formal entry can be made). If duty is owed, the Postal Service will collect it from the recipient before delivering the package. If the package is a gift worth more than \$100, the recipient will be charged duty. (Please see the section on gifts starting

on page X.) The sender can reimburse the recipient for whatever duty he or she has paid; however, by U.S. Customs regulation, duty cannot be prepaid; in all cases, including gifts, the parcel's recipient bears responsibility for paying it.

Textile items

Sometimes sending textiles can be a little tricky because they are subject to more regulations than other kinds of consumer goods. For example, there may be quota restrictions for importing textiles whose value is more than \$250. Formal Customs entries must be filed for all made-to-order suits from Hong Kong, no matter what the value, unless they accompany the traveler. Before sending textiles, whether whole cloth or apparel, to the United States from abroad, you should contact your local Customs port (which can be found in your local phone book under U.S. government listings) or the Customs attaché in an American embassy abroad about whether your textile package will be subject to import restrictions. (This is particularly true if the textiles are intended for sale as opposed to for your personal use or as a gift.)

Goods worth more than \$2,000

Shipments exceeding \$2,000 in value require a formal entry in order to release the merchandise. Filing a formal entry can get rather involved; most travelers are unfamiliar with the paperwork and other requirements and so hire an agent, generally a customs broker, to do it for them. If formal entry is required on a parcel, the parcel is held at the Customs International Mail Branch and notice is sent to the addressee of the package's arrival. The addressee can then go to the nearest Customs office to file the formal entry on the package. Once the Mail Branch has been notified that entry has been filed, the package will be released to the Postal Service and forwarded to its final destination. Please consult the U.S. Customs brochure *U.S. Import Requirements* for further information on filing formal entries.

Locating a missing or overdue package

If Customs has detained your package for some reason—for example, lack of a proper invoice, bill of sale, or other documentation; a possible trademark violation; or if the package requires a formal entry—the Customs International Mail Branch holding it will notify you immediately of the reason for detention and how you can get it released. These branches are listed on page X. When you have fulfilled the requirements necessary to effect release, Customs will clear the package, note how much duty is owed, and return it to the Postal Service for delivery.

The only exception to this procedure is for packages containing alcoholic beverages. U.S. Postal Service regulations prohibit mailing alcoholic beverages through the United States mail (18 U.S.C. 1716(f)). If someone mails you a package from abroad that contains alcoholic beverages, Customs will hold the package and send you, the addressee, a notice that the Customs International Mail Branch is holding the package for pickup. If you are unable to go to the mail branch yourself, you may send the branch a letter authorizing a specific, named individual to pick it up on your behalf. If the package is not claimed within 30 days, it will be destroyed.

If your package is long overdue or you think it may be lost in the mail, you should contact your local post office and request that a parcel tracer action be initiated to locate it. This is a matter over which Customs has no control.

Failure to claim a parcel

If a package is not claimed from the Post Office or a Customs mail branch within 30 days, it will be returned to the sender unless the duty is being protested.

Assessing and paying duty

The various rates of duty for goods are listed in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule (HTS), a book the size of an unabridged dictionary, containing thousands of entries. Whether or not your shipment requires the payment of duty depends on its classification as one of the categories of goods listed in the HTS. Determining a good's classification, and therefore its duty rate, is very complicated. The Customs inspectors who do this work have had extensive training. If you would like to get an idea of what the duty might be on a particular item, you can find a copy of the HTS in your local library, or you can go to our website at <www.customs.gov> and find a link to the HTS under the Importing Section. Please be aware that Customs makes the final determination about an item's classification, not you. If it is critical for you to know the exact rate of duty on an item you want to send to the U.S., please call your local port and ask to speak to an import specialist. Otherwise, keep in mind that textiles tend to have the highest rates of duty, and that approximately 65% of the items in the HTS have a zero rate of duty.

Goods not requiring duty

When Customs determines that a package can pass duty-free, the Mail Branch returns it to the Postal Service to be delivered by the addressee's local post office. In these cases, no additional postage, handling costs or other fees are required of the addressee.

Goods requiring duty

Packages that do not pass free of duty will have a yellow form, the Customs Mail Entry (form CF 3419A), attached to the outer wrapper. A Customs officer will have already filled out this form with the item's tariff classification number, rate of duty, processing fee, and the total amount that must be paid in order to take possession of the shipment. You should keep this yellow form until you are certain that you intend to keep the merchandise (please see the section on repairs/alterations, starting on page X).

After this happens—inspection of the package and completion of the CF 3419A—Customs sends the parcel back to the Postal Service, which sends it to a local Post Office for delivery. The local Post Office also collects the duty owed and a postal handling fee. This procedure applies to packages worth up to \$2,000; the recipient will have to file a formal entry with Customs for those worth more than \$2,000.

The postal handling fee will appear on the package in the form of postage-due stamps. (This fee is waived if the package contains dutiable goods mailed from an American military post office abroad.) A five-dollar (\$5) Customs processing fee will be assessed on all shipments on which duty is owed.

Note: Most personal shipments worth up to \$200, and gift packages worth up to \$100, will pass duty-free as long as the recipient does not receive multiple packages in a single day whose cumulative value is more than these amounts.

Duty on multiple mailings of similar goods

The rate of duty Customs assesses on a particular commodity mailed from abroad is not binding for future shipments of the same or similar merchandise. If you regularly receive a particular item through the mail, you might want to consider applying for a binding ruling.

Binding rulings on tariff classifications may be obtained by writing to:

U.S. Customs Service
National Commodity Specialist Division
Attn: Classification Ruling Requests
1 Penn Plaza, 10th & 11th Floors
New York, NY 10119

How to protest duty

If you think the amount of duty assessed on your package is incorrect, you can have it reconsidered in either of two ways:

(1) Pay the duty and take delivery of the package. Then, send the yellow copy of the mail entry (form CF 3419A), which was attached to your package when it was delivered, to the Customs office that issued it (which will be found in the lower right-hand corner of the form). Include with the yellow copy a written statement of why you believe the assessment was incorrect. If you have any other evidence regarding the value of the merchandise, like invoices or bills of sale, include copies of these as well. You have 90 days after you receive the package and pay the duty to make this request for a duty adjustment. If your protest results in a refund, the refund check will be made payable to the addressee shown on the mail entry.

(2) Decline to pay the duty and postpone taking delivery. Then, within five days of your refusal, provide the postmaster with a written statement of why you are protesting the amount of duty. The postmaster will forward your statement, the Mail Entry (form CF 3419A), and any invoices, bills of sale, or other evidence you choose to furnish, to the International Mail Branch that issued the mail entry. The postmaster will keep your shipment until the Customs Mail Branch informs him or her of the outcome of your protest. No postal storage charges will accrue during this period. If you are located near one of the Customs Service's International Mail Branches, the postmaster may send the CF 3419A to that branch instead, along with your statement and evidence for reconsideration of duties, taxes or fees.

Duty waiver policy

Although all merchandise that enters the United States by mail is subject to duty, the Customs Service normally waives duty on goods valued at less than:

- \$200, if you purchased the goods during the course of your travels for your use; or
- \$100, if the goods are sent as a gift to another person.

This waiver does not apply if the addressee receives more than \$200 (or \$100 for gifts) worth of goods from overseas in a single day.

Shipments eligible for duty waivers

Gifts

As indicated earlier, bona fide, unsolicited gifts will clear Customs duty-free as long as their fair retail value does not exceed \$100 and the recipient does not receive more than \$100 worth of gifts in the same day. (See 19 CFR Section 10.152.) There is no duty waiver for shipments containing alcohol-based perfume or tobacco products unless the entire shipment is worth less than \$5 retail. (19 CFR 10.153(e))

The duty-free limit is increased to \$200 fair retail value for bona fide gifts sent to the United States from the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, or American Samoa.

The duty waiver for gifts does not apply to “gifts” mailed to oneself or mail-ordered from the United States. It also does not apply where two or more persons traveling abroad together mail gifts to each other. But in these cases, the personal-use waiver of \$200 would apply, which is more generous than the gift waiver.

Gifts intended for more than one person may be consolidated in the same package if:

- They are individually wrapped,
- Each gift is labeled with the recipient’s name, and
- The value of each gift does not exceed \$100 (\$200 if sent from the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam).

Gift packages, including consolidated gift packages, will clear Customs more easily if they have the words “Unsolicited Gift” marked on the outside wrapping. Gift packages should also be marked with:

- The donor’s name,
- The nature of the gifts in the consolidated package (e.g., toy, sweater, glassware),
- Each gift’s accurate, fair retail value,
- The name of each recipient.

Here is an example of the correct way to mark a consolidated package:

Christmas Gifts

To John Jones—one belt, \$20; one box of candy, \$5; one tie, \$20.

To Margaret Jones—two blouses at \$30 each; one belt, \$15; one skirt, \$25.

Customs duty will be collected on all improperly marked consolidated packages.

Should any single gift within a consolidated package exceed the \$100 limit, then all the gifts in the package will be dutiable. In such a case, each gift is dutiable at the rate that would normally be assessed on that item. However, if the sender has not clearly marked all gifts so that the quantity and value of each can be readily determined, duty will be based on the highest duty rate applicable to an individual gift in the consolidated package.

United States products returned

Articles that are the growth, manufacture, or product of the United States and that have not been processed or enhanced in value while abroad are not subject to duty when they are returned to the United States. Packages containing United States goods only should be clearly marked on the outside wrapper “American Goods Returned.”

Articles acquired abroad and mailed home

Articles purchased during a trip abroad and mailed back to the United States will pass duty-free if they are worth less than \$200. (There are some exceptions; please see 19 CFR 10.153.)

Mail-order goods from overseas—those ordered from a catalogue or over the Internet, for example—will also pass duty-free if they are worth less than \$200.

Travelers sometimes confuse the \$200 waiver, which applies to goods *mailed* to the United States (unaccompanied merchandise), with the \$400 exemption for goods that *accompany* the traveler upon his or her return. The \$400 exemption from duty is applicable only to goods that actually accompany the traveler back to the United States.

There is one exception to the \$200 waiver, and that is for goods sent to the United States from the U.S. insular possessions, as noted in the following section.

Goods from U.S. insular possessions

If you return directly or indirectly from the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam, your duty-free exemption is \$1,200. This exemption applies both to merchandise mailed back to the United States as well as to goods that accompany a U.S. resident back to the United States.

Of the \$1,200 exemption, \$400 may be applied to merchandise not acquired in these islands. This \$400 exemption is increased to \$600 if the merchandise was acquired in a Caribbean Basin Initiative beneficiary country.

Tourist purchases acquired in and mailed directly from an insular possession to the United States may be entered free of duty under your \$1,200 exemption if the items are properly declared and processed. Articles acquired elsewhere than the insular possessions must accompany you at the time of your return for duty-free entry under your personal exemption.

After the \$1,200 duty-free exemption has been reached, another \$1,000 worth of articles acquired in the insular possessions may be sent to the United States and entered at a flat five percent rate of duty as unaccompanied tourist purchases. Any amount beyond this \$2,200 (\$1,200 duty-free; \$1,000 at five percent) will be dutiable at the various rates of duty that apply to the article(s). In order to get the duty-free allowance, be sure to follow the procedure outlined below when mailing purchases from an insular possession:

Step 1. Ask the merchant to hold your merchandise until you send him or her a copy of a validated Customs Form (CF) 255, “Declaration of Unaccompanied Articles.” This three-part form should be available where you make your purchase. If it is not, ask for one when you clear U.S. Customs on your return.

Step 2. When you return to the United States, if not before:

- List all articles acquired abroad on your Customs Declaration (CF 6059B) except those sent under the bona fide gift provision to friends and relatives in the United States.
- Indicate which articles are not accompanying you.
- Fill out a CF 255, “Declaration of Unaccompanied Articles,” for each package you are having sent.
- Have all your sales receipts handy. Customs inspectors will need to see them in order to validate form CF 255 when you clear Customs.

Step 3. When you return to the United States, Customs will validate the CF 255 as to whether your goods are free of duty under your personal exemption or subject to the flat rate of five percent by matching your list of unaccompanied articles against your sales slips, invoices, etc. At that time, the inspector will collect duty and tax on the goods accompanying you if any is owed. Finally, the inspector will return two copies of the CF 255, the yellow and the white, to you.

Step 4. Send the yellow copy to the shopkeeper or vendor holding your purchases and keep the other copy for your records.

Step 5. Instruct the shopkeeper to put the yellow copy of the CF 255, which you have sent, into an envelope and to attach the envelope securely to the outside of the package. Tell the merchant also to label the package on the outside wrapper, near the envelope if possible, “Unaccompanied Tourist Purchase.” **Note:** If the merchant does not attach a copy of a validated CF 255 to your package, you will not receive the benefits of this program.

Step 6. The Postal Service will deliver your package after it has cleared Customs. Your post office will also collect any duty or other Customs fees that may be owed, along with package handling fees. Although the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam are insular possessions of the United States, they are not considered part of the Customs territory of the United States. Therefore, articles imported into the United States from these islands are subject to duty. However, articles that are the growth or product of these islands, or that are manufactured or produced there, are duty-free if all three of the following conditions are met:

- Foreign materials do not comprise more than 50 percent of the manufactured articles’ appraised value, as determined by Customs.

- They come directly to the Customs territory of the United States from these islands.
- They are not prohibited by quota limitations or other restrictions.

U.S. government employees: personal and household effects

The personal and household effects of anyone employed by the U.S. Government, whether in a civilian or military capacity, are eligible for duty-free entry when that person returns to the United States after completing an extended-duty assignment abroad, if the employee was in possession of the articles before departing for the United States.

A sealed envelope containing a copy of the government orders terminating the assignment must accompany the articles. This envelope should be securely attached to the parcel's outer wrapper. The parcel should also have the words "***Returned Personal Effects—Orders Enclosed***" clearly written on the outside.

Articles ordered from military exchanges prior to departure for the United States and mailed directly from the exchange to a service member's home address in the United States, after departure, do not qualify under this exemption and are dutiable.

Goods for commercial vs. personal use

When assessing duty, Customs generally distinguishes between goods imported for personal use and those imported for resale or other commercial purposes. For instance, the \$400 personal exemption applied to tourist purchases acquired while traveling overseas may not be applied to goods that the traveler has purchased to sell in the United States.

However, the \$200 waiver for goods you mail to yourself while traveling abroad may also be applied to goods you mail to yourself for future resale. (Certain exceptions might apply to this allowance, however. Please see 19 CFR 10.151 and 10.153 for a description of what would disqualify goods from the \$200 personal waiver.) But if the total value of the package exceeds \$200, the entire package will be subject to duty.

Shipments not eligible for duty waivers

Goods sent by courier delivery services rather than through the postal service

Improperly marked goods

As discussed earlier in the section on gifts, duty will be assessed on all the items in consolidated packages that do not clearly indicate the value of each gift being sent to each individual recipient, as well as the total value of gifts in the package.

Articles ordered from military exchanges

Merchandise ordered from military exchanges abroad prior to a service member's departure for the United States and mailed from the exchange to the service member's American address after he or she has left the overseas post, do not qualify for a personal exemption or as a personal/household effect. These kinds of purchases are dutiable.

Tobacco and perfume over \$5 in value

There is no duty waiver for shipments containing alcohol-based perfume or tobacco products unless the entire shipment is worth less than \$5 retail. (19 CFR 10.153(e))

Sending an article abroad for repair or alteration

If you are sending merchandise, whether domestic or foreign-made, abroad for repairs or alterations, you should register it with Customs before sending it in order to avoid paying duty when it is returned. You can get a Customs Form (CF) 4455, “Certificate of Registration,” for this purpose at any local Customs office. (Foreign-made merchandise is dutiable every time it enters the United States unless the owner has demonstrated prior ownership, which the CF 4455 does.) . If you find yourself in a situation where you are being charged duty on an item that you sent abroad, you might protest the duty, and present any evidence you have that the item had been previously in your possession in the United States. The value of the repairs performed abroad may be dutiable even if the item being repaired isn’t.

Here’s how to register your merchandise before you send it out of the country:

Step 1. Bring the item(s) to your nearest Customs office for certification, which simply means that a Customs officer will verify that the article described on the CF 4455 is indeed the one being sent abroad. After so certifying, the Customs officer will complete the CF 4455 in duplicate with the date, port location, and his or her signature. The officer will give you both forms.

Step 2. Enclose the original CF 4455 with the merchandise you are sending abroad. This will facilitate Customs processing when the repaired merchandise is sent back to you.

Step 3. Be sure to instruct your foreign supplier to return the CF 4455 with the repaired article and to mark on the outside of the return package “***Repaired/Altered Merchandise—CF 4455 Enclosed.***”

Step 4. Keep the duplicate copy in case something goes awry and you need to demonstrate that you are liable only for duty on the repair and not on the entire article.

Repairs or alterations performed free of charge may also be subject to customs duty, depending upon what the Customs officer determines their value to be. The officer will make this determination after examining the return shipment. Should this happen to you, please be aware that duty is assessed on an article’s value, not the price paid for it.

If you’re not near a port

The Customs Service has arranged for people who live more than 20 miles from a Customs port to have their merchandise certified at local post offices. If this applies to you, bring your merchandise to your nearest post office; the postmaster will certify it on form CF 4455 in the manner described above.

Duty refunds on replacement articles

Occasionally, merchandise ordered from a foreign supplier is unsatisfactory: It may be the wrong size, color, broken in transit, or simply not according to your specifications. Recipients of such merchandise generally return the item to the foreign supplier and request a replacement free of charge.

The replacement article is dutiable. You may, however, request a duty refund on the original package (the unsatisfactory one) by writing to the Customs International Mail Branch that issued the original mail entry (CF 3419A) accompanying the unsatisfactory shipment. This branch will be found in the lower right-hand corner of the CF 3419A.

When you write to the mail branch to request a duty refund on the original package, include the following documents with your letter:

- A photocopy of the original mail entry (CF 3419A), and
- A written statement or other evidence—post office receipts, for example—from the post office where you mailed it back to the supplier showing that the first article was, in fact, returned. You should also enclose copies of any supporting correspondence with the foreign supplier concerning the exchange.

When the Customs International Mail Branch gets this information, it will review the transaction and issue a duty refund if appropriate.

Duty refunds on damaged articles

Parcels sent to the United States from abroad undergo much handling and processing by foreign and domestic post offices before they even reach the Customs Service. Customs only has possession of a parcel for a short time out of that entire period and thus has no control over the shipment during the rest of its journey. If your parcel arrives so badly damaged that its contents are beyond repair, you may choose to simply abandon the shipment to the post office. If you do this and you have already paid customs duty, you can apply for a refund by doing the following:

- Get a statement that you have abandoned the shipment from the post office that delivered it.
- Send a copy of that statement and a copy of your mail entry receipt (CF 3419A) to the Customs International Mail Branch that cleared your package. This branch will be shown in the lower right-hand corner of the mail entry receipt.
- Request a full refund of the duty and Customs processing fee. The Postal Service does not refund handling fees.

Restricted and prohibited goods

Medications and medical devices

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) <http://www.fda.gov> prohibits the importation, by mail or in person, of fraudulent prescription and non-prescription drugs and medical devices. These include unorthodox “cures” for such medical conditions as cancer, AIDS, multiple sclerosis or arthritis, to name just a few. The FDA also prohibits the importation of drugs that haven’t been approved for use in the United States. Even if these drugs and devices are legal elsewhere, if the FDA has not approved them for use in the United States, they may not be brought in, not even under a foreign doctor’s prescription or an American doctor’s supervision. They may not legally enter the United States and can be confiscated should they arrive by mail. You may, however, order FDA-approved medications for which you have a valid prescription. Generally speaking, you should not order more than a three-month’s supply, and a copy of your prescription should be included in the package. Customs cautions you that Internet sales of pharmaceuticals from other countries that largely trade in medicines may not be admissible into the United States. You might want to check with the Food and Drug Administration to determine admissibility before you purchase any medications over the Internet.

Ceramic Tableware **Warning**

Much of the ceramic tableware sold abroad contains dangerous levels of lead in the glaze, which can leach into food or drinks. The FDA recommends that ceramic tableware, especially when purchased in Mexico, China, Hong Kong or India, be used for decorative purposes only or be tested for lead release when you return home. Commercial laboratories can perform lead-release tests.

For additional information about ceramic tableware, contact your nearest FDA field office or write to:

Food and Drug Administration
Division of Import Operations and Policy (HFC-170)
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
Tel: 301.443.6553

Goods that violate trademark or copyright protections

<http://www.customs.treas.gov/enforcem/ipr.htm>

The U.S. Customs Service is authorized by law to prohibit the importation, by mail or in person, of goods that violate U.S.-registered intellectual property rights—that is, trademarks and copyrights. (The Customs Regulations governing intellectual property rights may be found in Title 19, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 133.) Imported goods that violate these laws are subject to seizure and forfeiture. In addition, the Customs Service can assess a monetary penalty against the importer based upon the article’s domestic value. Examples of merchandise that violates intellectual property rights laws include, but are not limited to:

- Articles bearing counterfeit trademarks, like fake designer or fake brand-name clothing or

watches.

- Toys that are unlawful copies of designs protected by copyright.
- Unauthorized reproductions of certain sound recordings.

For more information on intellectual property right protections, contact the U.S. Customs Service office nearest you or write to:

U.S. Customs Service
Office of Regulations and Rulings
Washington, DC 20229
ATTN: Intellectual Property Rights Branch
202.927.2330

Alcoholic beverages

U.S. Postal Service regulations prohibit sending alcoholic beverages through the mail (18 U.S.C. 1716(f)).

Other restricted/prohibited items

There are other categories of merchandise whose importation is also restricted or prohibited. These include, but are not limited to certain foodstuffs, certain domesticated and wild animals, some plants, products made from endangered species, narcotics, and certain weapons. (The Customs regulations governing these classes of merchandise may be found in Title 19, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 12.)

Most of the items that are prohibited or restricted are regulated by other government agencies; the Customs Service enforces those regulations on their behalf at American ports of entry. The penalties for attempting to enter restricted or prohibited merchandise vary according to which law has been violated and, in some cases, can be severe.

A more complete list of prohibited and restricted articles is available in our brochure, *Know Before You Go*, which lists the agencies whose import regulations—governing, for example, hunting trophies, flowers, or small arms—Customs enforces. Please request this publication from your local Customs office if you have detailed inquiries about products or merchandise you suspect may be prohibited or restricted.

Additional information on importing merchandise can be found on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website at www.cbp.gov.

Locations of Customs International Mail Branches

Buffalo, New York
1200 William Street
Buffalo, NY 14240
716.551.4319

Charlotte Amalie, Virgin Islands
Mail Branch Facility
Sugar Estate Post Office
Charlotte Amalie, VI 00801
340.774.2510

Chicago, Illinois
U.S. Customs Foreign Mail Unit
11600 West Irving Park Road
A.M.F. O'Hare
Chicago, IL 60666
312.353.6140

Dallas, Texas
P.O. Box 619050
2300 West 32nd Street
Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport
Dallas, TX 75261
972.574.2170

Detroit, Michigan
Foreign Mail Section
1401 West Fort Street Room 226,
G.M.F. Detroit, MI 48233
313.226.3137

Honolulu, Hawaii
3599 North Nimitz Highway
Honolulu, HI 96818
808.422.9608

Los Angeles, California
300 North Los Angeles Street
(through spring 2000)
Room B-202
Los Angeles, CA 90012-3391
310.834.1688

Miami, Florida
Foreign Mail Branch

P.O. Box 59-3244
Miami, FL 33159
305.526.2102

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota
180 East Kellogg Boulevard
Room 506
St. Paul, MN 55101

Newark, New Jersey
(NYBFMCE)(SURFACEMAIL)
U.S. Customs Service Foreign Mail Center
80 County Road
Jersey City, NJ 07097
201.714.9834

JFK, New York
U.S. Customs Mail Branch,
Bldg. 250 J.F.K. Airport
Jamaica, NY 11430
718.553.1446

Oakland/San Francisco, California
1675 7th Street
Room 416
Oakland, CA 94615
510.273.7560

Seattle/Tacoma, Washington
16601 Air Cargo Road
Seattle, WA 98158
206.553.5382

Customs and Border Protection also has more than 300 ports of entry across the United States, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. For the office nearest you, look on the Customs and Border Protection Web site at www.cbp.gov

REPORT DRUG SMUGGLING TO

THE U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE
1 (800) BE-ALERT

Customs Publication No. 0000-0514

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