

Applying for C-TPAT Frequently Asked Questions

(12/20/2007)



Q: How do eligible companies apply to participate in C-TPAT?

A: Businesses must apply to participate in C-TPAT. Participants complete an online electronic application on www.cbp.gov that includes submission of corporate information, a supply chain security profile, and an acknowledgement of an agreement to voluntarily participate. In completing the supply chain security profile, companies must conduct a comprehensive self-assessment of their supply chain security procedures using the C-TPAT security criteria or guidelines jointly developed by CBP and the trade community for their specific enrollment category. ([Online Application for C-TPAT](#)) The criteria or guidelines, available for review on the CBP website, encompass the following areas: Business Partner Requirements, Procedural Security, Physical Security, Personnel Security, Education and Training, Access Controls, Manifest Procedures, Information Security, and Conveyance Security.

Q: How are the trade participation categories selected?

A: CBP is responsible for screening all import cargo transactions. Utilizing risk management principles, C-TPAT seeks to enroll compliant low-risk companies who are directly responsible for importing, transporting, and coordinating commercial import cargo into the United States. The goal is to identify compliant trusted import traders who have good supply chain security procedures and controls to reduce screening of their imported cargo. In turn, this enables CBP to focus screening efforts on import cargo transactions involving unknown or high-risk import traders.

Q: What happens if a company fails to meet the C-TPAT minimum security criteria or guidelines?

A: Failure to meet C-TPAT commitments will result in suspension or removal of C-TPAT certification status and associated benefits. Benefits may be reinstated upon correcting identified deficiencies in compliance and/or security.

Q: What exactly are CBP expectations for the C-TPAT participant?

A: To make a commitment toward the common goal of creating a more secure and efficient supply chain through partnership. CBP understands that it has entered a new era and requires the assistance of private industry to ensure increased vigilance throughout the supply chain. CBP recognizes that just as it protects the trade and our borders, businesses must ensure that their brands, employees, and customers are protected to the best of their abilities.

Q: Will the information our company provides to C-TPAT be confidential?

A: All information on supply chain security submitted by companies applying for the C-TPAT program will be confidential. CBP will not disclose a company's participation in C-TPAT.

Q: As a company, we are very interested in C-TPAT but we are not interested in spending a lot of money or increasing our liabilities if something goes wrong. Is it still possible to participate in C-TPAT?

A: The decision to join C-TPAT is voluntary. Not all companies may be in a position to meet C-TPAT minimum security criteria or guidelines.

All eligible companies that import into the U.S. or provide import cargo movement or handling services should assess their supply chain security procedures to determine if they can qualify. CBP intent is to not impose security requirements that will be cost prohibitive. For this reason, we worked in concert with the trade community in developing security criteria and guidelines that reflect a realistic business perspective. Potential C-TPAT participants may find that they already have many of these guidelines in place.

C-TPAT is also not intended to create any new 'liabilities' for companies beyond existing trade laws and regulations. However, joining C-TPAT will commit companies to follow through on actions specified in the signed agreement. These actions include self-assessing security systems, submitting security questionnaires, developing security enhancement plans, and communicating C-TPAT guidelines to companies in the supply chain. If a company fails to uphold its C-TPAT commitments, CBP would take action to suspend benefits or cancel participation.

Q: How will the partnership work on an ongoing basis?

A: Upon satisfactory completion of the C-TPAT Online application and supply chain security profile, participants will be assigned a CBP C-TPAT Supply Chain Security Specialist (SCSS). A SCSS will contact the participant to begin the C-TPAT validation process.

For More Information:

Contact Industry Partnership Programs at (202) 344-1180 (202) 344-1180 or fax (202) 344-2626 or email us, at industry.partnership@dhs.gov