

C-TPAT Validation Process

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a C-TPAT validation?

A: A C-TPAT validation is a process through which the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) C-TPAT program meets with company representatives and visits selected domestic and foreign sites to verify supply chain security measures contained in the C-TPAT participant's security profile are accurate and are being followed.

Q: What is the goal of a C-TPAT validation?

A: The principal goal of a validation for CBP is to ensure that the company's C-TPAT security profile is reliable, accurate, and effective. However, validations also provide a forum through which CBP and a C-TPAT participant can build a stronger partnership by discussing supply chain security issues, sharing "best practices," and cooperatively developing solutions to address potential vulnerabilities. The face-to-face nature of a validation encourages both CBP and the C-TPAT participant to better understand the role each plays in securing our borders against international terrorism.

Q: Is a C-TPAT validation an audit?

A: No. A validation is not an audit. Whereas CBP routinely performs audits in a variety of operational and regulatory areas (e.g. trade compliance, NAFTA), C-TPAT validations do not measure a company's adherence to existing government rules and regulations. Instead, the validation is focused on the verification of supply chain security processes and procedures that a company voluntarily agrees to verify or perform under the auspices of the C-TPAT program.

Q: How long will it take to complete a C-TPAT validation?

A: Validations are focused and concise. Although they may extend beyond two weeks on some occasions due to CBP planning and travel, they will not involve more than ten working days of a company's time.

Q: Will all companies undergo a validation?

A: CBP validates the security profiles of all C-TPAT participants in accordance with SAFE Port Act requirements. The SAFE Port Act requires validation within one year of the company being certified.

Q: How will validations be scheduled?

A: The order in which a C-TPAT participant's profile will be selected for validation will be based on risk management principles. Validations may be initiated based on import volume, security related anomalies, strategic threat posed by geographic regions, or other risk related information. Alternatively, a validation may be performed as a matter of routine program oversight. CBP Headquarters will provide C-TPAT participants with approximately (30) thirty days advance notice prior to the beginning of any validation. The C-TPAT SCSS will work with the company's C-TPAT point of contact to schedule all validation visits.

Q: How will validation findings be reported back to the company?

A: At the conclusion of a validation, company management will be briefed on the findings of the validation. Additionally, a written Validation Report will be prepared and presented to the company shortly thereafter.

Q: How will validation findings impact a company's participation in C-TPAT?

A: If the validation findings are satisfactory, the results will increase the level of benefits provided to importer participants. If the validation findings reveal significant weaknesses in the company's application of C-TPAT guidelines or criteria, some or all of the participant's C-TPAT benefits may be suspended or removed until corrective action is implemented and verified.

Q: What role do the security criteria or guidelines play in the validation?

A: C-TPAT security criteria or guidelines were developed jointly by CBP and the trade community that companies must use to assess their own supply chain security programs. The criteria or guidelines are used to measure the company's overall commitment to C-TPAT and viability in the program. The validation process ensures the company's C-TPAT commitment

includes physical and procedural security requirements that enhance and verify supply chain security.