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WASHINGTON — U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has signed agreements with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to advance information-sharing to improve targeting of imports for health and safety violations. EPA and PHMSA are now part of CBP's Import Safety Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center (CTAC), a multi-agency center for targeting commercial shipments that pose potential threats to the health and safety of Americans.

"Imports that do not meet the critical safeguards established in our nation's environmental laws threaten public health and put companies that play by the rules at a disadvantage," said Cynthia Giles, assistant administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. "By partnering with other federal agencies we can better target inspections to identify illegal or non-compliant shipments, ensure health and safety standards are met, and level the playing field for companies that follow the law."

CTAC provides an avenue for agencies with import safety authority to streamline national operations and to share targeting expertise, tools and best practices. It also allows for a more targeted response to public safety threats, while simultaneously reducing duplicative examinations.

"By working together to determine which shipments are high-risk, the CTAC helps the government better protect consumers," said Allen Gina, assistant commissioner for CBP's Office of International Trade. "At the same time, the CTAC helps eliminate unnecessary examinations and facilitates low-risk shipments, so everyone benefits."

EPA has been a partner with CBP in numerous consumer protection efforts. EPA's inclusion in the CTAC will enhance interagency communication and collaboration to prevent the import of products which may pose a human health or environmental risk.

PHMSA protects the American public and the environment through a national field investigation program that ensures compliance with federal regulations covering safe and secure movement of hazardous materials, such as fireworks, batteries and energy products, throughout the U.S. by all transportation modes, including the nation's pipelines.

"We must continue to find innovative ways to work together and improve our abilities to protect communities," said Dr. Magdy El-Sibaie, PHMSA associate administrator for Hazardous Materials Safety. "Participation in the Import Safety

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Center and working closely with other federal agencies adds a new and very important way to investigate hazardous materials shipments.”

The addition of EPA and PHMSA brings the total number of agencies that are part of the CTAC to seven. The original CTAC partnership included the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and CBP. The agencies—each with their own statutory responsibilities for public safety—will work as a team to better target imports that should be examined for possible safety violations.

More information: http://cbp.gov/xp/cgov/trade/priority_trade/import_safety/ctac/
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