

Overview

The U.S. Customs Service Automated Manifest System (AMS) is both an imported merchandise inventory control system and a cargo release notification system. An integral part of the Automated Commercial System (ACS), AMS is interactive with other ACS systems such as Automated Broker Interface (ABI), the Cargo Selectivity system, and the National In-bond Control Program.

Inventory files are created from data transmitted to the U.S. Customs Data Center by participating carrier, port authority, or service bureau computers. The bill of lading number becomes the identifier associated with the information shown on a hard-copy manifest. Once the inventory records are opened, Customs updates the record with entry, examination, and release information for each shipment. This information is then electronically transmitted to the manifest data originator (the carrier, port authority or service bureau) and the Secondary Notify Party if one is designated. The AMS participant can amend manifest data electronically during the layorder period and throughout the on-line life of the bill of lading record. Carriers are not, however, exempt from regulatory provisions governing manifest amendments and may be subject to penalty for late filing. Specific local guidelines for carriers are available from local Port Directors of Customs.

Customs completes entry postings in two ways: First, Customs officers can manually post entries for informal and conventional in-bond entries that are not initiated electronically nor screened by the Cargo Selectivity system. Customs personnel input entry information through ACS terminals to match the open inventory records in the manifest database. After the match is made, release information is transmitted to the appropriate carrier or to the port authority or service bureau for dissemination to the appropriate carrier. Second, under the Paperless Master In-bond (MIB) procedure, participants receive authorization for the movement, but the bill of lading record remains open in AMS. The Customs Form (CF-7512) document is eliminated for Paperless MIB and participants do not receive electronic release notifications until the entry is presented to Customs at the port of in-bond destination.

Posting of formal and informal entries can automatically be done by the Cargo Selectivity system. If the entry is electronically submitted through ABI, it is automatically processed through the Cargo Selectivity system. The result of the processing is automatically posted to the manifest and transmitted to the broker and carrier. Based upon the local operational policy, hard copy release documents may not be required when the importing carrier is an AMS participant. Contact the local Customs office at the unloading ports to determine the release policy.

A change in the examination status generates a notification to both the broker and the carrier. The Cargo Selectivity system or a manually posted override may designate a shipment for an intensive examination. A release notification is transmitted immediately after examination results have been input.

Customs ultimate goal is to achieve "paperless" entry processing for the vast majority of shipments which do not require an intensive examination. The integration of ABI, Cargo Selectivity and AMS is the first step in that direction.

Formal entries that are not transmitted through ABI are presented in hard copy and processed against the Cargo Selectivity system by Customs personnel at a central processing location. Cargo Selectivity processing initiates posting and releases information to the carrier.

At the end of the layorder period, AMS identifies open shipments, those showing no entry received, or those with an entry, or entries received for less than the manifested or amended quantity. AMS generates messages listing the open bills of lading to the appropriate AMS participant.

AMS transfers the necessary in-bond data to the National In-bond Control Program when there is a "conventional" bonded movement. In-bond data is captured as a result of electronic transfer of Master In-bond transactions (ocean) from carriers, port authorities, or service bureaus, or as a result of the input of in-bond entry data by Customs. As with other informal postings, the computer assigns the batch filing number and transfers that number to the In-bond system so the document can be retrieved in case of failure to deliver in-bond cargo.

AMS allows Customs and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to place and remove holds against bills of lading. Holds prevent the carrier from releasing merchandise to the importer until the carrier has received hold removal notifications through AMS. An entry may be processed and the merchandise released by Customs, but the carrier cannot deliver that merchandise if a USDA hold is present.

Customs removes bills from the on-line databases into storage. The data may be retrieved from storage by Customs personnel and printed for audit purposes.