

4. Precise Description Guidance

Answer: The regulation requires a precise narrative description of the cargo or the 6 digit tariff number for those with the skill to provide it correctly. If there is doubt about the accuracy of a 6 digit tariff number, which can sometimes be difficult to ascertain, a precise narrative description should be used.

A precise narrative description is a description that is precise enough for Customs to be able to identify the shapes, physical characteristics, and likely packaging of the manifested cargo so that Customs can identify any anomalies in the cargo when a container is run through imaging equipment. The description must also be precise enough to identify any goods which may emit radiation. How specific that information must be depends on the nature of the commodity. For example, electronics is not a precise enough description, but electronic toys or personal/household electronics is acceptable.

Customs will continue to work with the trade to refine what descriptions are acceptable. Customs will not begin its enforcement actions with descriptions where the required level of precision is not clear. Customs will continue to notify the carriers when these more difficult commodities are not adequately described. However, cargo descriptions are one of the most important elements to assist Customs in precise targeting, and it is in the trade's interest to be as specific as possible. Not only will it avoid enforcement action, but it may also prevent container "holds" due to Customs not being comfortable that it knows what is in the container.

To be clear, IN NO CASE is a blank description, freight all kinds (FAK), said to contain (STC), general merchandise, "26 pallets", various retail merchandise, consolidated cargo or other similarly vague descriptions acceptable. On February 2, 2003, Customs will initiate strong enforcement actions in cases where these kinds of general descriptions, which have continued during the transition period, are still present. The following terms are meant to be used as a guide. They are illustrative, not exhaustive, examples of acceptable and unacceptable descriptions. Phrases or words in parenthesis are meant as examples.

| Not Acceptable | Acceptable |
|--|---|
| Apparel Wearing Apparel Ladies' Apparel Men's Apparel | Clothing Shoes Jewelry (may include watches) |
| Appliances | Kitchen Appliances Industrial Appliances Heat Pump |
| Autoparts Parts | New Autoparts Used Autoparts |
| Caps | Baseball Caps Blasting Caps Bottle Caps Hub Caps |
| Chemicals, hazardous Chemicals, non-hazardous | Actual Chemical Name (not brand name) Or U.N. HAZMAT Code Identifier # |
| Electronic Goods Electronics | Computers Consumer Electronics, Telephones Electronic Toys (can include Gameboys, Game Cubes, Dancing Elmo Doll etc.) Personal/Household Electronics (PDA's, VCR's, TV's) |
| Equipment | Industrial Equipment, Oil Well Equipment Automotive Equipment, Poultry Equipment etc. |
| Flooring | Wood Flooring, Plastic Flooring, Carpet, Ceramic Tile, Marble Flooring |
| Foodstuffs | Oranges Fish Packaged Rice, Packaged Grain, Bulk Grain |
| Iron | Iron Pipes, Steel Pipes |
| Steel | Iron Building Material, Steel Building Material |
| Leather Articles | Saddles Leather Handbags Leather Jackets, Shoes |
| Machinery | Metal Working Machinery Cigarette Making Machinery |
| Machines | Sewing Machines Printing Machines |

| Not Acceptable | Acceptable |
|---|---|
| Pipes | Plastic Pipes PVC Pipes Steel Pipes Copper Pipes |
| Plastic Goods | Plastic Kitchenware, Plastic Houseware, Industrial Plastics Toys, New/Used Auto Parts |
| Polyurethane | Polyurethane Threads Polyurethane Medical Gloves |
| | Personal Effects Household Goods |
| Rubber Articles | Rubber Hoses Tires Toys Rubber Conveyor Belts |
| Rods | Welding Rods Rebar Aluminum Rods Reactor Rods |
| Scrap | Plastic Scrap Aluminum Scrap Iron Scrap |
| STC (Said to Contain) General Cargo FAK (Freight of All Kinds) "No Description" | |
| Tiles | Ceramic Tiles Marble Tiles |
| Tools | Hand Tools Power Tools Industrial Tools |
| Wires | Electric Wires Auto Harness Coiled Wire (Industrial) |