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Notes



Shipping to Trade Shows in **Mexico**

By Michelle Bruno

Since the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada, shipping exhibition goods to Mexico has become somewhat easier. However, there are still some peculiarities and challenges worth noting by exhibitors and trade show organizers. Perhaps the most important piece of advice is not to go it alone. A freight forwarder with experience in Mexican trade shows and a team to handle the on site material handling procedures can greatly simplify the shipping process.

What Exhibitors Need to Know

DOCUMENTS

A commercial invoice, packing list, and applicable Certificate of Origin are required for exhibition shipments to Mexico. A NAFTA Certificate of Origin is necessary for goods manufactured in the U.S. or Canada in order to receive preferential duty treatment for goods over \$1,000 US. The commercial invoice and packing list must provide accurate information on the following items:

- Place where the invoice is issued
- Date the invoice is issued
- Seller's name
- Seller's full address
- Importer's name (this information may change for temporary imports)

- Importer's full address (see above)
- Detailed description of the goods
- Quantities in weights and measures
- Unit prices
- Total value of the invoice
- Identification numbers such as serial, part, and model numbers of each item
- Invoice number
- Seller's tax identification number
- Type of currency
- Country of origin
- Marks and numbers of the packages
- Total number of packages

Mexican Customs will not accept the term "No Commercial Value" for any item. For giveaway items, exhibitors should use the lowest possible realistic value. For saleable material, the commercial invoice must reflect the price at which the item would be sold. Once a value is stated on an official document, it cannot be changed. Mexican Customs reserves the right to determine commercial value, should they consider the stated value to be false.

All shipments to Mexico are opened, inspected, and compared to the commercial invoice/packing list. Discrepancies may cause delays and possible additional costs and fines. Whether it is paper clips or machines, exhibitors should take great care to be exact in descriptions and quantities. Invoices that are already translated into Spanish will speed the clearance process;

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however, most experienced exhibition freight forwarders can arrange to have the invoices translated before the goods are shipped.

Goods that will be imported permanently (advertising materials, giveaways, perishables) must be listed on separate invoices from items that will be imported on a temporary basis. Different importation procedures are followed for dutiable goods (permanent import) than for non-dutiable goods (temporary import).

COURIER SERVICES

Courier services such as United Parcel Service, FedEx, and DHL should only be used under certain circumstances:

- Shipments are low-value (under \$1,000 US)
- Shipments are for permanent import (dutiable) only
- Shipments are addressed to a specific individual or company who will be responsible for collecting the shipment and delivering it to the show site
- Clearance procedures are arranged in advance (shipment is cleared by the courier service and duties charged back to the shipper or shipment is addressed to an individual in Mexico who arranges the customs clearance and pays the duty)

TEMPORARY IMPORTS

The procedures for temporary imports (high value items not intended to be sold or goods intended for sale but without a pre-designated buyer before the exhibition) are much improved from several years ago. However, foreign (Non-Mexican) companies still have to apply for temporary import permits and can only sell goods to companies that are registered buyers. Qualified freight forwarders can assist exhibitors with the temporary importation formalities and facilitate transfer of the items to the buyers at the close of the exhibition.

DUTIES AND TAXES

In addition to the applicable duties (if any) on permanently imported goods, a Value Added Tax (I.V.A.) of 15% applies to all services rendered in Mexico and on the commercial value of all dutiable items. In addition, Mexican Customs charges a processing fee (DTA)

of 0.8 % on the value of all items processed (permanent and temporary imports).

MATERIAL HANDLING

One aspect of shipping to trade shows in Mexico involves delivery to the stand, lifting and handling, provision of labor, and storage of empties. Freight forwarders that do not specialize in exhibition shipments do not offer these services on a regular basis (including courier services). Exhibitors should contract with forwarders that provide a door-to-stand service. Exhibition organizers should consider recommending only forwarders and specialized companies that offer these services as part of a comprehensive package for exhibitors.

SPECIAL PERMITS

Certain Products (foodstuffs, seeds, grains, beverage, chemical, textile and leather) require permits and certificates issued by an appropriate Mexican Government Ministry. Exhibitors should notify the freight forwarder immediately in order to initiate the permit process prior to shipping.

What Organizers Need to Know

It is the exhibitor's responsibility to submit the correct documentation and information to the freight forwarder who will work with an authorized and experienced Mexican Customs Broker to effect the importation and delivery of the exhibition goods to the convention center. The broker is required to maintain a record of all customs entries and evidence of cancellation of temporary import entries (through re-exportation or nationalization) for several years.

While the exhibition organizer is legally relieved of any responsibility for customs procedures, they are accountable to their exhibitors to offer assistance and make recommendations on qualified companies to assist in the appropriate and timely execution of export/import/delivery procedures from the points of origin in the U.S. to the stand in Mexico. The designation of an "official" freight forwarder and customs broker can help organizers assist their exhibiting customers by mitigating any risks associated with the importation of goods for the show.

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