

C-TPAT: Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism

Business and Government Work Together

The Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) is a voluntary initiative, administered by the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), through which government and private industry work jointly to secure the global supply chain. Through C-TPAT, businesses agree to implement specific security “best practices” as defined by CBP. In return, C-TPAT participants receive a number of benefits from CBP that facilitate their shipments’ processing and entry into the U.S.

C-TPAT was developed in the weeks following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The program is intended to make the U.S. border impenetrable to the threat of future terrorism by ensuring that the global supply chain is as secure as possible. Every business in any way involved in the transportation or importation of goods to the U.S. is encouraged to participate. Since C-TPAT was introduced in 2001, it has had an impact on supply chain practices as C-TPAT standards are increasingly becoming the norm.

Who is eligible to participate in C-TPAT?

The program is available to all companies that are connected to shipping or importing into the United States. This includes, but is not limited to, manufacturers, importers, customs brokers, logistics providers, carriers (highway, rail, sea, and air), terminal operators, and consolidators. Currently, more than 9,000 businesses are certified C-TPAT participants. According to CBP Director of C-TPAT/Industry Partner Programs Brad Skinner, that figure includes the following:

- 2,500 Carriers
- 4,200 Importers
- 850 Foreign Manufacturers
- 790 Customs Brokers
- 730 Consolidators

How does a business become a C-TPAT participant?

Businesses that opt to participate in the program must apply to CBP and undergo extensive examinations of their business processes — both internal and external. Potential C-TPAT participants work with CBP to identify potential security gaps within their supply chain and address a broad range of security topics, including personnel, document processing, physical security, and manifest procedures. In addition, C-TPAT applicants agree to ensure security practices of their business partners. Thus the reach of the program extends to businesses that are not active C-TPAT participants.

Purolator is a strong supporter of the C-TPAT initiative. Through Purolator Trade Solutions, customers have access to a team of professionals with expertise in all U.S. and Canadian trade-related programs.



C-TPAT relies on voluntary participation by private industries, working in partnership with the U.S. government, to help ensure border security.

What is required of C-TPAT participants?

Businesses certified for C-TPAT participation agree to abide by “best practices” as set forth by CBP to improve the security of their business practices — both internally and with their external business partners.

According to CBP documentation, program members agree to address a broad range of topics, including personnel, physical and procedural security, access controls, education, training and awareness, manifest procedures, conveyance security, threat awareness, and documentation processing. In addition, C-TPAT participants agree to implement increased levels of security throughout their supply chain, thereby applying program standards to businesses that might not be C-TPAT participants.

Businesses approved — or validated — for C-TPAT participation are subject to ongoing evaluation, as well as revalidation that takes place every three years. CBP reports that more than 800 businesses have been suspended from the program for failure to abide by C-TPAT’s requirements.

What benefits do C-TPAT participants receive?

In return for commitment to ensuring a safe supply chain, businesses are rewarded with the following incentives:

- Reduced number of CBP inspections
- Reduced border crossing wait times
- Priority processing for CBP inspections
- Assignment of a C-TPAT security specialist who will work with the company to validate and enhance security throughout the company's supply chain
- Eligibility to attend C-TPAT supply chain security training seminars
- Potential eligibility for CBP Importer Self-Assessment Program, with an emphasis on self-policing rather than CBP audits

In addition to the benefits provided directly by CBP, many businesses have reported that the program’s rigorous validation process has the added benefits of the following:

- Enabling discovery of flaws and inefficiencies in their business practices
- Improved and streamlined supply chain effectiveness
- Increased customer satisfaction

C-TPAT is regarded by CBP as the “largest and most successful government-private sector partnership.” The program launched in November 2001 with just seven participants. Today more than 9,000 businesses are participating, with a growing number of businesses realizing the importance and marketing potential associated with C-TPAT certification.

Purolator International has been a C-TPAT participant in good standing since 2013.

To learn more about these and other supply chain innovations, visit www.purolatorinternational.com/whitepapers.