



A Special Research Report on "Errand Matters" in the Process of Customs Clearance and Port Operation of Imported Wood based on the Perspective of a Freight Forwarder

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I. Background and significance of the research

"Let the data run more and the people run less" is one of the goals of customs and other port supervision authorities in recent years to optimize the business environment at the ports and promote the facilitation of cross-border trade clearance. The freight forwarder is an important participant in the import and export trade process, so the investigation and understanding of the customs clearance operations that need to be completed by "running errands" from the perspective of the freight forwarder will help the customs in providing a direction for achieving the goal of "Internet + government services" , so as to further optimize the business environment at the ports.

II. Scope of research

Time of investigation: March- June 2023
Ports of investigation: Shanghai, Qingdao, Tianjin, Ningbo, Nansha of Guangzhou, Xiamen, Shekou of Shenzhen, Yantian of Shenzhen
Research methods: data collection and interview with experts
Commodity scope: imported timber by sea

III. 12 Common "errand" items and description

No.	"Errand" items	Description
1	Amending the manifest	Usually the freight forwarder needs to request for amending the manifest under the following two circumstances: the first is that the manifest data is found incorrect before the declaration; the second is the amendment of the manifest following the amendment of the customs declaration from after the declaration according to the principle of consistency. At these times, the freight forwarder needs to cooperate with the shipping company or shipping agency to prepare the relevant documents and may need to "run an errand" for the submission of documents.

No.	"Errand" items	Description
2	Canceling or amending a customs declaration form	An application can be made to the customs for the amendment or cancellation of a declaration form when the conditions prescribed in the Administrative Rules governing the Amendment and Cancellation of a Customs Declaration Form for Import and Export Goods of the People's Republic of China (General Administration of Customs Decree No. 220) are met. Among them, the handling of the Form of Amendment or Withdrawal of an Import or Export Declaration and the validation of relevant documents may require the enterprise to "run an errand" to the customs desk at the port.
3	Accompanying an inspection	When the goods are selected for inspection, there are two inspection methods for the freight forwarder: non-accompanied inspection and accompanied inspection. Currently the application of these inspection methods for wood varies at various ports.
4	Submitting inspection documents on site	At present, there are two situations in the time and place of submitting inspection documents at each port: one is to submit the relevant documents to the designated place or the customs desk before the inspection; the other is to hand over the documents to the inspection officer when accompanying the inspection on-site. The role of submitting the inspection documents is: firstly, it is equivalent to submitting a document to the customs, and the customs carries out the action of checking and receiving the documents; secondly, the paper documents facilitate the examination and validation of the relevant information by customs inspection officers.
5	Submitting documents for machine inspection only	When goods are only required for machine inspection, there is no need for the enterprise to submit documents. The customs will directly arrange machine inspection of the goods and there is also no need for the enterprise to accompany the inspection.
6	Submitting documents for manual inspection transferred from machine inspection	When manual inspection is also arranged in addition to machine inspection, the inspection procedures are basically equivalent to manual inspection to the enterprise which may need to submit documents and accompany the inspection.
7	Application for Confirmation Form of No Problem Inspection Result for the Exemption of Operation Service Fees	For goods that meet the requirements of inspection and are exempt from lifting, shifting and warehousing charges, the enterprise needs to apply for the Confirmation Form of No Problem Inspection Result for the Exemption of Operation Service Fees , which may involve "running errands" offline.

No.	"Errand" items	Description
8	Reservation for quarantine treatment	If the wood is found to be infested with pests during the inspection, it will be required to be fumigated, which usually requires the enterprise to hand over the Notice of Inspection and Quarantine Treatment to the fumigation company to make an appointment.
9	Exchange of Delivery Order	The forwarder will have to surrender the bill of lading to the shipping company or shipping agent in exchange for the delivery order. At present, the mainstream operation mode still requires the forwarder to submit the original paper bill of lading.
10	Handling the Equipment Interchange Receipt	At present, most ports accept electronic Equipment Interchange Receipt (EIR), which allows the freight forwarder to apply for an EIR directly via the relevant system without the need for "running an errand" to the counter, while some ports and shipping companies are still operating in the paper EIR exchange mode requiring the enterprise to apply through the counter.
11	Collecting the Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Entry Goods	The Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Entry Goods has two versions, the paper version and the electronic version. With the electronic version, the freight forwarder can download and print it directly via the Single Window, while with the paper version, the freight forwarder needs to collect it at the customs desk at the port.
12	Payment and receipt of invoices of wharf inspection fee, fumigation fee, fees charged by the shipping company/ shipping agent and fees charged by the wharf, container repairing and cleaning fee	The payment methods include online payment and on-site payment; invoice forms include electronic invoice and paper invoice. Such combination may cause "errands" to freight forwarders.

IV. Item-by-item comparison of "errand matters" at major ports

(I) Amendment of manifest

The transmission and amendment of manifest mainly involves the exchange between the shipping agent and the customs. The freight forwarder needs to cooperate with the shipping agent to prepare the relevant documents. There are two ways for the transmission of documents: submission at the counter and online transmission.

Table 1 Ways of delivery of documents by the freight forwarder for the amendment of manifest at each port

Port	Way of submission
Shanghai	Transmission via e-mail
Qingdao	Transmission via e-mail
Tianjin	Transmission via e-mail
Ningbo	Submission of paper documents at the shipping agent's counter
Nansha, Guangzhou	Transmission via e-mail
Xiamen	Transmission via e-mail
Yantian, Shenzhen	Submission of paper documents at the shipping agent's counter
Shekou, Shenzhen	Transmission via e-mail

Note: The above "way of delivery of documents" only represents the most common situation learned by the survey and does not suggest that it is the only way at the port.

(II) Cancellation or amendment of a customs declaration from

General Administration of Customs Announcement No. 55 of 2015 Announcement on Matters related to the Paperless Operation of the Amendment and Cancellation of the Import and Export Goods Declaration¹ clearly states that: “Where the consignee or consignor of the import and export goods or his agent (hereinafter referred to as the parties) meets the requirements set out in the Administrative Rules of the P.R.C.

Customs governing the Amendment and Cancellation of Customs Declaration for Import and Export Goods (Decree No. 220 of the GACC, hereinafter referred to as the Administrative Rules), may, through the ‘amend and cancel document application/confirmation’ function of the China E-port Pre-entry System (hereinafter referred to as the Pre-entry System), apply to the customs for the amendment or cancellation of import and export goods declaration (hereinafter referred to as the customs declaration). Where the customs needs to verify the paper documents, the parties concerned shall submit the relevant paper documents.

However, in practice, there are differences in the operation modes at different ports. For details, see the following table:

¹ <http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/302249/302266/302267/356251/index.html>

**Table 2 Operation modes of cancellation and amendment
of customs declaration at various ports**

Port	Whether an "errand" is required	Specific operation steps
Shanghai	Yes	Present relevant documents to the customs at the port to confirm whether the declaration can be canceled or amended; The section chief agrees and signs the Form of Amendment/Cancellation of Import and Export Goods Declaration; The enterprise initiates an application for the cancellation or amendment of the declaration form via the Single Window; The enterprise may amend or cancel the declaration form after confirmation by customs.
Qingdao	Yes	Present relevant documents to the customs at the port to confirm whether the declaration can be canceled or amended; Submit the Form of Amendment/Cancellation of Import and Export Goods Declaration (after entering the manual documentary examination mode, it is also necessary to ask the customs examiner to sign); The enterprise initiates an application for the cancellation or amendment of the declaration form via the Single Window; The enterprise may amend or cancel the declaration form after confirmation by customs.
Tianjin	Maybe	The enterprise calls customs to confirm whether the declaration form may be canceled or amended;
Ningbo	Maybe	If permitted the enterprise initiates an application for cancellation or amendment of the declaration form via the Single Window; If the customs needs to check the paper documents, they should be submitted to the customs at the port; if there is no need for verification, no need to "run an errand"; The enterprise may cancel or amend the declaration form after confirmation by customs.
Nansha, Guangzhou	Maybe	The enterprise initiates an application for cancellation or amendment of the declaration form via the Single Window;
Xiamen	Maybe	If the customs needs to check the paper documents, they
Yantian, Shenzhen	Maybe	should be submitted to the customs at the port; if there is no need for verification, no need to "run an errand";
Shekou, Shenzhen	Maybe	The enterprise may cancel or amend the declaration form after confirmation by customs.

As can be seen from Table 2:

(1) Tianjin port, Guangzhou Nansha Port, Xiamen port, Shenzhen Yantian Port and

Shenzhen Shekou Port have basically accepted paperless cancellation or amendment of a customs declaration form;

(2) Shanghai and Qingdao ports still require the enterprise to submit the Form of Amendment/Cancellation of Import and Export goods Declaration and/or have it signed by a customs officer at the port office, which is contrary to the provisions of the GAC Announcement No. 55 of 2015. Article 5 of the Announcement has made it clear that: The application by the enterprise for canceling or amending the customs declaration through the Pre-entry System is deemed to be the submission by the enterprise to the Customs of the Form of Amendment or Cancellation of the Import and Export Goods Declaration or the Confirmation of Amendment/Cancellation of Import and Export Goods Declaration.

(III) Accompanying the inspection

After the goods are selected for inspection, there may be two options for a freight forwarder: accompanied inspection or unaccompanied inspection. Unaccompanied inspection is an innovative practice of customs to facilitate the enterprises and speed up the clearance of goods during the COVID pandemic, which has been continued and promoted to varying degrees in the stage of economic recovery. At present, the selection of unaccompanied inspection of wood products by enterprises at each port is as follows:

Table 3 Options of unaccompanied inspection of wood products at each port

Port	Whether the enterprise can independently choose the mode of accompanied inspection	The mode of accompanied inspection of imported wood chosen by the enterprise
Shanghai	Optional	In Yangshan, while the enterprise can choose unaccompanied inspection independently (which is also checked by default), the inspection site is not fixed and the location of the container to be inspected can change any time. Therefore, the enterprise still needs to be present at the scene to locate and mark the goods for inspection according to the instructions for inspection and wait for customs to inspect the goods; in Waigaoqiao, the enterprise only has to enter the port site to help locate the goods when there are more types of goods or when customs clearly requires it to do so.

Port	Whether the enterprise can independently choose the mode of accompanied inspection	The mode of accompanied inspection of imported wood chosen by the enterprise
Qingdao	Unaccompanied inspection is stipulated	Unaccompanied inspection
Tianjin	Optional	Accompanied inspection
Ningbo	Optional with Lingang Inspection Section 4; no free choice with other offices.	Case-by-case choice with Lingang Inspection Section 4; unaccompanied inspection with Section 1 of the Chuanshan Office; accompanied inspection with all other offices.
Nansha, Guangzhou	Optional	Accompanied inspection
Xiamen	Unaccompanied inspection is piloted in Dongdu; accompanied inspection is stipulated in Haicang.	Accompanied inspection
Yantian, Shenzhen	Stipulated unaccompanied inspection	Unaccompanied inspection
Shekou, Shenzhen	Unaccompanied inspection is stipulated ; accompanied inspection if required upon notification by customs.	Accompanied inspection for logs; unaccompanied inspection for planks.

In fact, accompanied inspection and unaccompanied inspection both have advantages and disadvantages. While unaccompanied inspection can reduce the number of "errands" to the scene by the enterprises, accompanied inspection is convenient for enterprises to follow up the shifting of the container. If live insects are found in the wood or other unqualified situations arise, they can take photos and feedback to their customers on the spot. It is precisely because of these reasons that customs brokers, freight forwarders and cargo owners are more willing to choose accompanied inspection. In addition, from the customs perspective, for reasons of shortage of customs inspection personnel and inspection premises, the full implementation of unaccompanied inspection is also a challenge. Therefore, it is suggested that the customs offices of all ports actively share the lessons learned from unaccompanied inspection, so as to better facilitate the customs clearance of enterprises. Meanwhile, unaccompanied inspection should not be forced upon the enterprises, leaving space for them to choose independently.

(IV) Submitting inspection documents at the customs desk

**Table 4 Status of submission of inspection documents
at customs desk at each port**

Port	Time and place of submitting relevant documents for inspection	Purpose of submitting relevant documents for inspection
Shanghai	Submission to the inspection center on the same day of inspection	Equivalent to a second report of the inspection plan; the assistant inspector distributes the documents to the customs officers in charge of inspection
Qingdao	No submission required	No submission required
Tianjin	Submission of the customs declaration form and bill of lading to the "exit inspection premise" before 9 a.m. (The "exit inspection premise" is the venue responsible for collecting customs declarations and bills of lading and compiling them into tables. It does not carry out physical inspection itself.)	The staff of the "exit inspection premise" will compile the documents submitted by the enterprise into a table, so as to facilitate the arrangement of inspection by the customs.
Ningbo	Submission on-site during accompanied inspection	To facilitate the checking and verification of the documents by customs officers.
Nansha, Guangzhou	Submission of the declaration form to customs for dispatch before inspection; customs declaration, certificate of origin and phytosanitary certificate to be brought to the customs for on-site inspection	The first is to send the documents to customs for dispatch; the second is to facilitate the checking and verification of the documents by customs officers.
Xiamen	Submission on-site during accompanied inspection	To facilitate customs officers' checking and filing of the inspection documents when handling clearance.
Yantian, Shenzhen	Dropping the relevant inspection documents in the file basket in front of the customs desk before inspection	To facilitate the checking and verification of the documents by customs officers.
Shekou, Shenzhen	No submission required	No submission required

Qingdao and Shenzhen Shekou give the best performance in the process of submitting paper documents for inspection. The enterprises do not need to "run an errand" to submit relevant documents for inspection.

Although the time and place of offline submission of paper inspection documents in Ningbo, Xiamen and Yantian of Shenzhen are different, the purpose is to facilitate the checking and verification of the relevant documents by customs officers. In fact, the relevant documents have been uploaded to the system at the time of customs declaration, which the inspection officer can view in the man-portable operation system. So except circumstances where the original paper documents must be verified, the enterprises won't need submit the paper documents and paperless inspection can therefore be achieved. Of course, this does not rule out the responsibilities of the enterprises themselves. Enterprises usually carry paper documents in preparation for possible checking during the customs inspection. So it also calls on the field staff of the enterprises to reduce the printing and copying of non-essential documents to achieve paperless. At the same time, it is suggested that the port terminal can enhance the signal strength of the port area and help the advancement of paperless inspection, since unstable signal of mobile phone and man-portable equipment is also one of the reasons for the need to check paper documents during the inspection.

The requirement of Shanghai, Tianjin and Guangzhou Nansha for "errands" to submit the relevant documents have the role of reporting to customs the inspection plan so as to facilitate the dispatch by customs. Although the inspection can be completed following the report of the plan on the same day and the enterprise "runs an errand" only once a day, customs can certainly retrieve the relevant customs declaration numbers from the inspection instructions in the system and randomly distribute them for inspection. It is therefore recommended to do away with such requirement for submission of inspection documents.

(V) Submitting documents for machine inspection only

**Table 5 Status of submitting inspection documents
at the customs desk for machine inspection only at each port**

Port	Whether an "errand" is needed to submit paper documents	Remarks
Shanghai	No	
Qingdao	No	
Tianjin	No	
Ningbo	No	On-site unlocking is needed at Pier II (Unlocking operation process: After the company name and container number are registered at the dock, the dock makes a job order so that the container can be moved to the inspection site.)

Port	Whether an "errand" is needed to submit paper documents	Remarks
Nansha, Guangzhou	No	
Xiamen	Yes	Submission of the documents to the inspection room before passing through the machine, and retrieving them from the front desk after passing through the machine.
Yantian, Shenzhen	Yes	After being selected for inspection, drop the inspection documents in the file basket at the customs desk.
Shekou, Shenzhen	No	

Xiamen and Shenzhen Yantian still require the submission of paper documents for machine inspection only. It is recommended to eliminate such requirement.

(VI) Submitting documents for manual inspection transferred from machine inspection

Table 6 "Errands" at each port when machine inspection is transferred to manual inspection

Port	Whether an "errand" is needed to submit documents
Shanghai	No
Qingdao	No
Tianjin	Yes
Ningbo	Yes
Nansha, Guangzhou	Yes
Xiamen	Yes
Yantian, Shenzhen	No
Shekou, Shenzhen	No

If the inspection of the goods needs to be transferred from mechanical inspection to manual inspection, from the freight forwarder's point of view, the operation process is equivalent to manual inspection. In this connection, the ports of Shanghai, Qingdao, Shenzhen Yantian and Shenzhen Shekou give the best performance.

(VII) Applying for Confirmation Form of No Problem Inspection Result for the Exemption of Operation Service Fees

The Confirmation Form of No Problem Inspection Result for Exemption of Operation Service Fee is a document required for the enterprises to enjoy "exemption from inspection fees" treatment in accordance with State Council Order No. 16 of 2015. According to this investigation, the current practice regarding whether this form is needed and the applying procedures vary at different ports. The details are as follows:

Table 7 Handling of the Confirmation Form of No Problem Inspection Result for Exemption of Operation Service Fees at each port

Port	Whether this form exists	Applying procedures
Shanghai	No	
Qingdao	Yes	Apply using the "One-stop Port App"
Tianjin	Dongjiang:No Xingang:Yes	In Xingang the Form is filled in advance by the enterprise and presented on-site at the desk when the fees are paid
Ningbo	No	
Nansha, Guangzhou	Yes	The enterprise prints, signs and stamps the Form and presents it to the inspection center at the wharf when paying fees.
Xiamen	No	The enterprise receives feedback on the status of inspection fee exemption via the Single Window
Yantian, Shenzhen	Yes	After customs inspection, the Form is transferred to the General Section to be signed and collected by the enterprise.
Shekou, Shenzhen	Yes	Mawan Inspection Premise: the Form is printed by the inspection premise for the customs to sign and transfer to the Inspection Section; the enterprise then signs and submits the form to the inspection premise staff. Other inspection premises: the enterprise first applies for the Form at the dock or the payment counter ; after being signed by the customs, the Form is returned to the place where it is distributed.

According to the normal procedure, after customs inspection, for goods that meet the conditions of "exemption from inspection fees", the custom will issue and sign the Confirmation Form of No Problem Inspection Result for Exemption of Operation Service Fees to the enterprise. Upon presenting this Form, the enterprise can enjoy the exemption of this part of the fees when paying fees at the wharf. As far as the current situation is concerned, the handling of this Form in Shanghai and Ningbo ports is worth promoting. The customs communicates directly with the port so that

the qualified goods are directly exempted from the fees without going through other formalities. The practice in Qingdao and Xiamen is also good in that the exemption procedure is completed online through an App or the Single Window so that the enterprise does not need to "run an errand". In Tianjin, Guangzhou Nansha, Shenzhen Yantian and Shenzhen Shekou, the procedures related to this Form are still quite complicated. It is suggested that they learn from the good practices of other ports with a view to optimizing the process.

(VIII) Reservation for Quarantine Treatment

For imported wood, if infestation with pests is found during inspection, it is usually required to carry out quarantine treatment -- fumigation, which requires the freight forwarder to give the Notice of Inspection and Quarantine Treatment (the Notice) issued by the customs to the fumigation company to make an appointment. The specific reservation process of each port is shown in the following table:

Table 8 Handling of reservation for fumigation of wood at each port

Port	Online or Offline	Specific process
Shanghai	Offline	Submit the Notice to make an appointment
Qingdao	Online	Send the electronic version of the Notice to the third party in the inspection area on WeChat
Tianjin	Online	Appointment with the fumigation company through telephone call or WeChat
Ningbo	Online	Upload Notice at the fumigation company's website
Nansha, Guangzhou	Online	Transmit the electronic version of Notice to the fumigation company
Xiamen	Offline	Submit the declaration form and the Notice to the fumigation office for an appointment
Yantian, Shenzhen	Offline	No reservation is required for the fumigation premise. When fumigation is needed, a letter of authorization and a copy of the agent's signed ID should be submitted to the customs
Shekou, Shenzhen	Offline	On-site verbal appointment

No “errand” is required for fumigation at the ports of Qingdao, Tianjin, Ningbo and Nansha of Guangzhou. It is suggested that fumigation companies of other ports learn from their practice and transmit the Notice of Inspection and Quarantine Treatment on the website or WeChat mini-program for fumigation reservation.

(IX) Exchange of Delivery Order

In order to change the Delivery Order (D/O), the forwarder has to surrender the bill of lading to the shipping company/shipping agent. At present, the main operation mode still requires the freight forwarder to submit the paper original bill of lading. If the bill of lading is a Telex Release bill of lading, the freight forwarder needs to submit the Telex Release bill of lading, the letter of indemnity for Telex Release and the letter of authorization.

Table 9 "Errand" for the exchange of D/O at each port

Port	Original bill of lading	Telex Release B/L
Shanghai	Submit original B/L to the counter	The Telex Release B/L of COSCO, Haifeng and OOCL can be exchanged paperless; for others Telex Release B/L, letter of indemnity for telex release and letter of authorization need to be submitted.
Qingdao	Submit original B/L at the counter	COSCO and OOCL Telex Release B/L can be exchanged paperless; for others Telex Release B/L, letter of indemnity for telex release and letter of authorization need to be submitted at the counter.
Tianjin	Submit original B/L at the counter	Submit Telex Release B/L, letter of indemnity for telex release and letter of authorization at the counter
Ningbo	Submit original B/L at the counter	COSCO and OOCL Telex Release B/L can be exchanged paperless; for others Telex Release B/L, letter of indemnity for Telex Release and letter of authorization need to be submitted
Nansha, Guangzhou	Submit original B/L at the counter	COSCO and Xinhaifeng Telex Release B/L can be exchanged online; for other Telex Release B/L, letter of indemnity for telex release and letter of authorization need to be submitted
Xiamen	Submit original B/L at the counter	Sinotrans and Unitrans require the submission of Telex Release B/L, letter of indemnity for telex release and letter of authorization at the counter (mailing is required by Xinhaifeng); other shipping agents can exchange the D/O paperless
Yantian, Shenzhen	Submit original B/L at the counter	submit copy of B/L and letter of authorization at the counter
Shekou, Shenzhen	Submit original B/L at the counter	submit copy of B/L and letter of authorization at the counter

In summary, the Telex Release bill of lading of COSCO, Xinhaifeng and OOCL shipping companies can be exchanged for D/O paperless, which provides lessons to

be learned by other shipping companies.

(X) Handling the Equipment Interchange Receipt

Table 10 Handling of electronic EIR at each port

Port	EIR form (online & offline)
Shanghai	Online
Qingdao	Offline with MSC, online with others
Tianjin	Online
Ningbo	Online
Nansha, Guangzhou	Online processing in small number
Xiamen	Online
Yantian, Shenzhen	Offline processing in small number; Some online processing, but paper EIR still needs to be printed and handed over to the container truck driver
Shekou, Shenzhen	While online handling by most shipping companies/shipping agents, the freight forwarder usually prints a paper version of the EIR and hands it over to the container truck driver, whether it is handled online or offline

Note:

- *Online Equipment Interchange Receipt: after the freight forwarder completes the formalities on the corresponding system platform, the shipping company/shipping agent will issue the container code or other forms of EIR, and the driver can pick up the container with the code. However, the situation in Shenzhen is special: even after the online handling of the corresponding procedures, it is still necessary to print out a paper EIR and hand it over to the driver which the driver then uses to pick up the container.*
- *Offline Equipment Interchange Receipt: the freight forwarder goes to the shipping company/shipping agent counter to go through the formalities for obtaining the paper EIR which the driver then uses to pick up the container from the dock.*

Electronic EIR has been implemented for many years, but some shipping companies/shipping agents still need the freight forwarders to handle the EIR offline in Guangzhou Nansha, Shenzhen Yantian, Shenzhen Shekou. It is therefore recommended that these shipping companies/shipping agents actively learn from the experience of other shipping companies/shipping agency in electronic EIR in order to achieve paperless operation.

In addition, although some shipping agents/shipping companies in Shenzhen Yantian and Shenzhen Shekou also provide online EIR processing, some container management yards still require paper EIR when the freight forwarder returns the

empty container. So the freight forwarder also needs to print a paper EIR even if he can handle EIR online. Therefore, it is suggested that the container management yards step up their efforts to cooperate with the application of electronic EIR.

(XI) Collecting the Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Entry Goods

Table 10 Handling of electronic EIR at each port

Port	Form of Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Entry Goods (electronic & paper)
Shanghai	Electronic version and paper version
Qingdao	Paper version
Tianjin	Electronic version and paper version
Ningbo	Paper version
Nansha, Guangzhou	Electronic version
Xiamen	Electronic version
Yantian, Shenzhen	Electronic version
Shekou, Shenzhen	While electronic certificate is checked for the release of the goods during documentary examination, some Sections require the submission of paper documents and the Certificate on-site for the release of the goods during physical examination

Although the GAC has called for higher application ratio of the electronic version of the Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Entry Goods since 2021, only Guangzhou Nansha, Xiamen, Shenzhen Yantian and Shenzhen Shekou have completely realized the application of the electronic version of the the Certificate. The reason why the electronic version has not been fully utilized is that it has no stamp on it and lacks credibility. Therefore, it is suggested that:

- the relevant government departments ramp up the promotion of the electronic certificate by making it clear that it is as effective as its paper version so as to its improve social recognition;
- electronic stamp and signature be put on the electronic certificate through the use of technology; and
- after a period of social recognition and transition, the customs announce the elimination of the paper version of the certificate.

(XII) Payment and receipt of invoices of import-related fees

During the process of customs clearance and port operation for imported wood, the freight forwarder makes payment to such parties as the dock, shipping company/ shipping agency and fumigation company. The payment methods include offline

payment and online payment. The invoices received include paper invoice and electronic invoice. The degree of convenience of payment by the enterprise at each port is different, as shown in detail in the following table:

**Table 12 Specific situation of payment
in the import process of wood at each port**

		Convenience: Low > > > > > High							
		Shanghai	Qingdao	Tianjin	Ningbo	Nansha, Guangzhou	Xiamen	Yantian, Shenzhen	Shekou, Shenzhen
Wharf inspection fee	Payment method	Online payment	Online payment	Offline payment	Online payment (Daxie offline)	Online payment	Fleet payment	Online payment	Offline payment
	Invoice Form	Electronic invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Electronic invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice
Other types of fees charged by dock	Payment method	Online payment	Online payment	Online payment	Online payment	Online payment	Fleet payment	Online payment	Online payment
	Invoice Form	Electronic invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Security charge-electronic
Fumigation charge	Payment method	Offline payment	Online payment	Online payment	Online payment	Online payment	Online or offline	Online payment	Offline payment
	Invoice Form	Yangshan: Paper Waigang: Electronic	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Usually electronic	Electronic invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice
Fees charged by shipping company/ agent	Payment method	Online payment	Online payment	Online payment	Online payment	Online payment	Online payment	Online & offline	Online & offline
	Invoice Form	Electronic invoice	Most electronic	ZIM-paper other-electronic	Electronic invoice	80% electronic	Electronic invoice	Most electronic	Electronic invoice
Container repair and cleaning charges	Payment method	Fleet or Container company payment	Online & offline	Offline payment	Most online, less offline	Online payment	Fleet payment	Fleet payment	Fleet payment
	Invoice Form	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Most electronic, less paper	Electronic invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice	Paper invoice

Note:

- Payment by the trucking company in Xiamen: Xiamen Port Terminal company signs a service agreement with the trucking company. Accordingly, payment is settled online

periodically according to the relevant business operations that occurred between the trucking company and the terminal. In case there is no agreement signed, payment can be made by logging in the online business hall of the Container Terminals Group through WeChat, Alipay, online mobile banking and other forms of payment.

- Payment by trucking company in Shanghai: on-site payment; payment by container release company in Shanghai: debit based on agreement.
- Payment by trucking company in Shenzhen Yantian and Shekou: cash or QR code payment on site.
- As can be seen from the table above, generally, the wharf, fumigation company, shipping company and shipping agency have an online payment system. However, except for the shipping company/shipping agency, most of the invoices received are paper invoices. Some of the paper invoices can not be issued in time and need to be issued and collected at the counter on the following day or even in the following month. According to the freight forwarders, basically all Special VAT Invoices need to be collected offline in paper form. Since September 1, 2020, the State Administration of Taxation has been pushing forward the step-by-step application of electronic Special VAT Invoice among the newly registered taxpayers in the country. It is therefore recommended that the dock, fumigation companies, storage yards and other fee-charging parties try actively to understand and implement electronic Special VAT Invoice so that the freight forwarders can take advantage of its faster and more convenient delivery and reduce the "errands" in the payment operation.

V. Scoring based on "errand matters"

First of all, scores are given according to the frequency of "errands". 1 point is given to non-routine and low probability matters such as amendment of manifest and cancellation or amendment of customs declaration form. Although the inspection-related matters are also unconventional matters, the probability of occurrence is relatively high, so the score is 2 points. The relatively routine matters, such as exchanging the B/L to D/O, handling the EIR, collecting the Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Entry Goods and paying fees, score 3 points. The arithmetic average is then used as the weight of each investigated item.

Table 13 Scores and weights of the degree of frequency of each "errand" item

"Errand matters"	Frequency score	Weight
Amendment of manifest	1	3.8%
Cancellation and amendment of customs declaration form	1	3.8%

"Errand matters"	Frequency score	Weight
Accompanying inspection	2	7.7%
Submitting inspection documents at customs desk	2	7.7%
Submitting documents for machine inspection only	2	7.7%
Submitting documents for manual inspection transferred from machine inspection	2	7.7%
Applying for Confirmation From of No problem Inspection Result for Exemption of Operation Service Fees	2	7.7%
Reservation for Quarantine Treatment	2	7.7%
Exchange of Delivery Order	3	11.5%
Handling Equipment Interchange Receipt	3	11.5%
Collecting Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Entry Goods	3	11.5%
Payment and receipt of invoices of import-related fees	3	11.5%

Then the specific situation of "errands" regarding each item at each port is scored: 0 point for the need for "errands"; 0.5 point for possible need for "errands" (the scores for Handling the EIR and the Payment are given by taking into account the number of enterprises that need to "run errands"); and 1 point for no need for "errands".

Finally, the scores for each item are weighted and summed, arriving at the total scores and rankings of each port. See the following table for details:

Table 10 Handling of electronic EIR at each port

	Qingdao		Shanghai		Tianjin		Shekou, Shenzhen	
	Nansha, Guangzhou	Xiamen	Ningbo	Yantian, Shenzhen				
1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
2	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
3	0.5	1	1	0.2	1	0.2	0.5	0.5
4	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
5	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
6	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
7	1	0	1	1	0.5	1	0	0
8	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
9	9.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	9.2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	0
	9.3	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0	0.25	0

		Qingdao		Shanghai		Tianjin		Shekou, Shenzhen		
		Nansha, Guangzhou		Xiamen		Ningbo		Yantian, Shenzhen		
10		0.8	0.2	1	1	1	1	0.4	0.4	
11		0	1	0	1	0	0	0.5	1	
12	12.1	Payment	1	1	1	1	0	0.8	0	1
		Invoice	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
	12.2	Payment	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
		Invoice	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.5	0
	12.3	Payment	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
		Invoice	0	0.8	0.5	1	0	0	0	0
	12.4	Payment	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5
		Invoice	0.8	0.9	1	1	0.8	1	1	0.8
	12.5	Payment	0.5	1	0.5	1	0	0.8	0	0
		Invoice	0	1	0	0	0	0.8	0	0
12.6		0.53	0.87	0.7	0.7	0.38	0.64	0.3	0.43	
13		0.644	0.575	0.571	0.510	0.505	0.503	0.485	0.365	
14		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	

Note:

1: Amendment of manifest

2: Cancellation or amendment of customs declaration form

3: Accompanying inspection

4: Submitting inspection documents at the customs desk

5: Submitting documents for machine inspection only

6: Submitting documents for manual inspection transferred from machine inspection

7: Applying for Confirmation Form of No Problem Inspection Result for Exemption of Operation Service fees

8: Reservation for Quarantine Treatment

9: Exchange for Delivery Order

9.1: Original bill of lading

9.2: Telex release bill of lading

9.3: Total DO exchange score

10: Handling the EIR

11: Collecting the Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Entry Goods

12: Payment and receipt of invoices of import-related fees

12.1: Dock inspection fees

12.2: Other fees charged by the dock

12.3: Fumigation fees

12.4: Fee charged by the shipping company/agent

12.5: Container repair and cleaning charges

12.6: *Payment score*

13: *Weighted Score*

14: *Rankings*

VI. Conclusion

(1) Taking into account the scores of all ports, Qingdao port has the highest for "more data running, less people running", while Shenzhen Yantian has the lowest;

(2) Most ports basically do not need "errands" for the five items of amending manifest, canceling and amending the customs declaration form, submitting documents for machine inspection only, handling the EIR and payment and receipt of invoices to shipping company/shipping agent;

(3) Most ports need "errands" for submitting inspection documents at customs desk, exchange of Delivery Order and payment and invoicing of dock fees.

VII. Suggestions

(1) It is suggested that the customs of relevant ports optimize the procedures of cancellation and amendment of customs declaration form: Shanghai and Qingdao ports should learn from the experience of other ports in making the cancellation and amendment of customs declaration form paperless by eliminating the submission of paper documents. This is in accordance with the GAC Announcement No. 55 of 2015 Announcement on Matters related to the Paperless Operation of Amendment and Cancellation of Import and Export Goods Declaration. Accordingly, the enterprise initiates the application for cancellation and amendment of the customs declaration and upload relevant documents via the Single Window. The customs reviews, approves and sends feedback online, completing the process.

(2) Allow the enterprises to independently choose unaccompanied inspection: The starting point of unaccompanied inspection is to facilitate the enterprises and reduce "errands". In reality, however, it is difficult to advance large-scale implementation from the perspectives of both customs and freight forwarders. Therefore, it is suggested that all ports actively exchange the experience of unaccompanied inspection, improve the details of the process in time without forcing unaccompanied inspection on the enterprises so as to leave space for them to choose independently.

(3) Call on the customs and enterprises to jointly reduce the printing and submission

of non-essential paper documents: where the purpose of carrying or submitting relevant paper documents for customs inspection is not to verify the original of the documents but only to facilitate viewing during the inspection, it is recommended that the customs first remove the requirement for the submission of documents at the desk, which can be retrieved from the man-portable system. The enterprises should also gradually get used to electronic documents in going paperless. At the same time, it is recommended that port terminals and communication service providers enhance the signal strength in the port areas to ensure smooth access to documents through the electronic equipment.

(4) Eliminate the Confirmation Form of No Problem Inspection Result for Exemption of Operation Service Fees: promote the practice regarding the exemption of inspection fees at Shanghai and Ningbo ports when there is no problem with the goods after inspection. After the completion of the inspection of the goods, the customs and the port communicate directly the information about the exemption from the inspection fees. The enterprise does not need to apply for the Form.

(5) It is recommended that fumigation companies use online system tools to complete the reservation: fumigation companies at Shanghai, Xiamen, Shenzhen Yantian and Shenzhen Shekou ports transmit the Notice of Inspection and Quarantine Treatment through the website or WeChat mini program to complete the reservation for fumigation and eliminate the submission of the paper Notice and on-site reservation.

(6) It is suggested that the port departments, container management yards and shipping company strengthen cooperation in research and promoting the wide application of paperless exchange of DO and electronic EIR.

(7) It is suggested that the customs apply electronic stamp and electronic signature in the Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Entry Goods, so as to enhance the recognition of the electronic certificate by the regulatory body and the market in domestic circulation.



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