

## **Import Clearance Process at Ghana Seaports**

The introduction of the GCNet electronic clearance system in September 2003 was a welcome development for shippers and customs house agents alike, as it cut down the clearing time substantially and allowed for on-line, exchange of trade information. Unfortunately, in recent times there have been complaints about the abuse of the customs clearance system which is quite disturbing. This has prompted the Council to take measures to ensure that shippers are well informed about the demands and the requirements of the customs clearance system and procedures involved. This following is therefore intended to serve as a guide in the conduct of cargo clearance in the ports.

### **DO'S**

Appoint a licensed Customs House Agent [clearing agent] with a credible reputation who will do the following on your behalf:

1. Submit the final invoice, IDF [from the Ministry of Trade & Industry], Packing list and a copy of the Bill of Lading two weeks before arrival of vessel to the Designation Inspection Company [DIC].
2. Pick up the Final Classification and Valuation Report [FCVR] from the DIC.
3. If you are an importer of a used vehicle, submit bill of lading, bill of purchase and chassis number of the vehicle to CEPS for the determination of the value.
4. Obtain a Tax Identification Number [TIN] form from the Internal Revenue Service [IRS], if you are a first time importer.
5. Submit a declaration on the cargo electronically to Customs through the GCNet computer front-end software.
6. Ensure that all the fields on the declaration are completed with accurate data.
7. Print out the response from GCMS and effect payment of the prescribed duty and taxes at either ECOBANK or Ghana Commercial Bank.
8. Attach the bank payment receipts, bill of lading, invoice, IDF, FCVR, designated CEPS officer in the Long Room for Verification.
9. Proceed to the Shipping Line/Agent with the Declaration and all the attachments mentioned here above as well as a completed Delivery Order [DO] for First Release [ie 'prior to physical examination] or Final Release [ie without physical examination].
10. Effect payment of the relevant GPHA charges at the port.
11. Deposit the green copy of the DO with the GPHA Operations for the container to be dropped within 24 hours' at the designated bay for physical examination by CEPS, if necessary.
12. Arrange a truck to convey cargo from the port.
13. Present Declaration and accompanying documents to CEPS at the port gate to confirm clearance on the GCMS. GPHA security also checks the waybill covering the goods.
14. Make all documents available to the Police, CEPS or National Security, only on request, for auditing after exiting the port.

### **SCAN OPTION**

1. If your container is to be scanned, then deposit the declaration, DO and the interchanging [evidence of dropping container on the truck] at the CEPS office at the Scanning Area.
2. Pick up your Scan number [appointment sheet] from the Scan operations office and wait for your turn.
3. Present the Appointment sheet to the Check-In Agent at the entrance of the scanner.
4. Confirm final clearance of container after the scan at the CEPS office at the scanning area.

### **DON'TS**

1. Do not deal with an unlicensed Clearing Agent. Common traits of such Agents are as follows:
  - They have no offices ['under-tree' operators]
  - They have no fixed line telephone numbers

- They have no identification cards linking them to any recognised clearing company.
  - They promise short delivery times.
  - They promise lower duties.
  - They offer lower clearing charges
2. Do not accept any offers to prepare fresh invoices locally, to either underestimate values or mis-describe goods.
  3. Do not connive with Clearing Agents, Shipping Lines/Agents for a 'deal' on your transactions.
  4. Do not offer GPHA equipment operators' money to induce them to deliver the services for which you have already been billed.
  5. Do not attempt to conceal goods during physical examination. Avoid paying the examination' officer to "overlook" discrepancies in the manifest and arrived cargo.
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