

Questions and Responses Regarding the Impact of Sequestration on Imports

1. How is CBP communicating information to stakeholders about the effects of the sequestration?

Response: CBP port management will be reaching out to advise stakeholders of any changes in port operations, including procedures for shipment specific inquiries and hours of service. Companies that participate in CBP initiatives and programs such as the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT), Importer Self-Assessment (ISA), and Centers for Excellence and Expertise (CEE) may also reach out to CBP staff such as supply chain security specialists, account managers, and CEE personnel who may assist with inquiries.

At the national level, OFO and the Office of International Trade (OT) Headquarters staff will participate in weekly telephone conference calls, coordinated through the Office of Trade Relations, with cargo industry stakeholders to address the impacts of the sequester on imported shipments. As part of the weekly conference call, OFO, OT, and industry stakeholders will discuss modifications to this document to address impacts caused by sequestration.

2. What impact will the sequestration have on CBP radiation portal monitors (RPM) staffing?

Response: CBP will ensure that its core antiterrorism mission is not compromised. OFO will carry out its responsibilities to prevent the entry of terrorists and/or terrorist weapons into the United States, and under no circumstances will CBP abdicate or diminish our commitment to this critical aspect of our responsibilities. CBP port directors will determine the extent to which budgetary reductions will impact CBP RPM staffing hours of operation and notify trade stakeholders accordingly. The budget reductions for overtime expenses which take effect on March 1 will impact some CBP ports' ability to staff RPM locations. Once personnel furloughs commence, staffing resources will be further reduced.

3. What affect will sequestration have on CBP's ability to respond to other trade disruptions (natural disasters, labor disputes, etc.) during sequestration?

Response: CBP field locations have continuity of operation plans that provide for a response to more than one incident at a time. In the event of an additional event that results in a trade disruption, CBP will engage with industry stakeholders to coordinate an appropriate response.

4. Will there be any special procedures for conveyance diversions during sequestration?

Response: Unlike a trade disruption caused by natural events, the cuts tied to the sequestration would be made equally across the agency, with no preference by port of arrival. Since CBP ports of entry will not be closed, there will be no special procedures for conveyance diversions. Since all ports will be operating with reduced resources, diversions would likely be an expense without any realistic gain. Under existing procedures, conveyance diversions are reported to the port director.

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5. Will CBP be requiring vessel masters arriving directly from foreign locations to wait until business hours to process crew and passengers?

Response: CBP port directors will be reaching out to advise stakeholders of any changes in the procedures for processing conveyances that arrive outside the hours of service.

6. What effect will the sequestration have on shipments designated for examination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)?

Response: OFO will continue to perform the required cargo inspections of regulated perishables with associated conditions of entry based on plant pest risks identified by USDA. CBP is working with other partner agencies (PGA) to assess the impact of those PGA's sequestration plans. CBP strongly encourages continued dialogue between trade stakeholders and the local partner agency points of contact for specific information on the impacts of the sequestration.