

Facilities: International Shipping

International shipping is not as confusing as customs officials make it sound. When preparing your international shipment it is very important to itemize the contents of the shipment into an Export List. This itemized list can be attached to the Shipping Request or it can be emailed to the Shipping Dept. Expendable items that have limited value do not need to be itemized: for example, it is not necessary to write down x number pads of paper or x number of pens and pencils; "pads of paper" and "pens" will suffice. It is recommended that you do not ship personal items with your science gear. This will often cause the customs officials to inspect the shipment and result in a delay. Remember, customs officials are tax collectors and they look for items that could be sold or traded within their country. Boots, rain gear and cold weather deck clothing should be put down as deck gear. Radios, tape players, and cameras should be hand carried and registered with US Customs before leaving the country. These items are not considered scientific equipment. An Export List or Shipping Request Form must be prepared for all items being shipped or hand carried to any foreign country. Items placed aboard research vessels that will be visiting foreign ports also require an Export List. These forms are for use in preparing the required US export documents created by the Shipping Department. (The "invoice", in this case, is not a billing form but rather a list of items already owned by the Institution.) All items must show the country of manufacture and present value. Remember that some countries have an import tax; thus it is important not to overvalue items on customs and invoice declarations. If the item is of foreign manufacture, model number and serial number must be shown for registration with US Customs for return to the United States.

All equipment should be properly marked with country of manufacture. Equipment manufactured at Woods Hole should be marked "Made at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution USA". Any item not marked could be assumed to be of foreign origin and be subject to duties upon return to the United States.

When shipping research equipment and associated material back to the US a copy of the original itemized list must be sent to the Shipping Dept. as it will be required for clearing the shipment through US Customs. However, if some items have been left at sea or other location, a new itemized list must be prepared. In either case, you must send the Shipping Department a copy of the invoice so that when your shipment arrives in Boston we can have our customs broker clear the shipment through customs. Though you may have given the agent numerous copies of the itemized list, do not assume that any of those copies will arrive with the shipment. Rarely does an itemized list remain with a shipment when you turn it over to an agent or airline in a foreign port. Once your shipment returns without the paperwork, it will remain in customs until they receive a properly completed itemized list with descriptions of the goods, their countries of manufacture and their values.

It is most important to have the foreign agent send the original Bill of Lading to our broker, Barry International when shipping an ocean container back to WHOI. The steamship lines will not release the equipment without this important document. If this Bill of Lading is sent to you and you're on vacation or on another cruise, then the container will sit at the container yard accumulating storage charges while you are away.

When sending air freight back to WHOI, ask the agent to fax the Shipping Department all pertinent information (air-bill number, flight, date of shipment, number of pieces, etc.) for our follow-up. If we do not know a shipment is coming, we cannot notify our broker that it will be needing customs clearances. Please don't forget to alert the Shipping Department beforehand, or call us immediately when you arrive back at WHOI. You may always send a shipment freight collect to WHOI and our broker will advance airline charges upon its arrival. Do not send freight back to WHOI C.O.D. (Cash on Delivery) unless you are prepared to give the driver cash (no checks accepted) for all the transportation charges. The freight will not be unloaded without full payment for all charges. Always ask the agents or carriers for air-bill number, bill of lading numbers, or copies of any other documents before you leave the country of export. If a shipment should go astray or be damaged, these documents will help the Shipping Department track the shipment while in transit and/or file claims within a reasonable period of time with the proper transportation agency. Notify the Shipping Department as soon as possible if there are damages or shortages.

Always consign equipment returning from foreign locations to:

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
c/o Barry International Forwarding, Inc.
88 Black Falcon Avenue, Suite 167
S. Boston, Mass. 02210
United States of America
Leo J. Barry
Phone Number (617) 261-3500
Fax number : (617) 261-3565
email: leoj@barryintl.com

When sending back material from overseas, first consider the time period in which you will next be needing it. There is no next day air service on international shipments. Also, there is nothing that can be done to expedite entry into the country in regards to US Customs or airline schedules. Steamship lines carrying ocean containers send their vessels into many ports enroute to Boston. Far East steamship lines don't call at East Coast ports. They prefer to use mini land bridge (railroad stack trains) to deliver equipment to East Coast cities. This takes time, generally four to six weeks for a container returning from a foreign port.

Air freight service is only as good as the agent. Agents do not always put science interests first. Agents work for the ships, and therefore

Related Files

» [International Shipping](#)
(pdf format)

respond to the masters of the vessels and not to gear that needs to be transported for science. Airline, steamship, and trucking personnel work for you. A little extra time spent dealing with the carrier often will get the shipment out the door of the agent's facility sooner than waiting for the agent to finish with the ship's business.

Most common carriers have LCL service to and from overseas ports. This service is quite good and easy to use. Fill out a Bill of Lading and an itemized list; these are generally all that will be needed to ship your equipment back to WHOI from an overseas port. If you want to use ocean freight for your return shipment, check with the Shipping Department to see if this type of service is available in the port you will be returning from. This service is inexpensive, but takes time (allow four to six weeks).

Carnets

Also known as "Merchandise Passports", carnets are international documents that simplify the customs procedures for the temporary importation of various types of goods. When used properly they can eliminate the payment of duties and value-added taxes, replacing the need for temporary import bonds. However, there are strict procedures which must be followed to take advantage of these benefits.

A carnet must be stamped 4 different times: 1. Before leaving the U.S.; 2. When entering the foreign country; 3. Before leaving the foreign country; and 4. When re-entering the U.S.

The original carnet must remain in the hands of someone who will be responsible for obtaining the required signatures.

A carnet is good for 1 year only.

Every item that ships on the carnet must return to the U.S. together, within 1 year.

If the original carnet is lost, or the required signatures were not obtained, significant penalties may be assessed.

Once a carnet has been set up it cannot be changed. You are not allowed to add or subtract items.

If you plan on using a carnet to ship your equipment, the WHOI Shipping Department must have your completed itemized list at least 3 days prior to shipment to insure proper documentation.

Last updated: May 8, 2014

Copyright ©2007 Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, All Rights Reserved.

Mail: Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, 266 Woods Hole Road, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA.

E-Contact: info@whoi.edu; press relations: media@whoi.edu, tel. (508) 457-2000

Problems or questions about the site, please contact webdev@whoi.edu