

2

Airport and Maritime
Operations Manual

Airport Operations

Mail

Contents

Introduction	page 2-6-1
Policy	page 2-6-1
Materials Needed	page 2-6-2
Table or inspection area with adequate lighting	page 2-6-2
Maintaining Contact with Customs and USPS	page 2-6-2
Methods and Procedures	page 2-6-2
Step 1: Determining the Thoroughness of Inspection Required	page 2-6-3
Step 2: Checking for Permits	page 2-6-3
Step 3: Opening Parcels	page 2-6-4
Step 4: Determining the Condition of the Shipment	page 2-6-5
Step 5: Determining Admissibility	page 2-6-5
Step 6: Inspecting the Parcel's Contents	page 2-6-6
Step 7: Taking Regulatory Action	page 2-6-6
Step 8: Determining Whether to Issue a Civil Penalty	page 2-6-7
Step 9: Issuing Civil Penalty	page 2-6-7
Step 10: Applying a Civil Penalty	page 2-6-7
Step 11: Documenting Action Taken and Submitting Intercepted Pests	page 2-6-8
General Procedures for Inspecting Domestic Mail	page 2-6-8

Introduction

The *Mail* section of Airport Operations gives you the information needed to regulate mail. See also “Clearing Mail Importations” of the *Special Procedures* section of your *Animal Product Manual*. All mail from foreign locations and U.S. possessions is subject to inspection. Inspection is necessary to minimize the risk of introducing agricultural pests.

Policy

PPQ policy is to clear all foreign parcels of agricultural interest at the first port of arrival into the United States. U.S. Postal Service (USPS) parcels are cleared at the mail inspection facilities recognized by U.S. Customs.

Offshore domestic mail is also subject to inspection. First Class domestic mail (including Express and Priority mail) is targeted due to the perishable nature of some high-risk material. However, you **cannot** examine First Class mail without a search warrant.

Materials Needed

Depending on local cargo holding procedures, you'll need access to some of the following items to control mail:

- ◆ *Animal Product Manual*
- ◆ *Plant Import: Nonpropagative Volume of Manuals*
- ◆ References, as appropriate
- ◆ Forms (PPQ Form 287, Mail Interception Notice, and other appropriate forms)
- ◆ Alcohol
- ◆ Bags for safeguarding quarantine material
- ◆ Brushes
- ◆ Can opener
- ◆ Forceps
- ◆ Hand lens
- ◆ Insect vials and pill boxes
- ◆ Personal safety equipment
- ◆ Probe
- ◆ Sealing tape
- ◆ Table or inspection area with adequate lighting

Local Variations

Because of the differences in Customs procedures, postal facility procedures, and local practices, the methods of inspecting mail may vary from port to port. However, due to laws governing the handling and inspecting of domestic mail, you must follow the established port and national procedures. Search warrants, for example, are mandatory for opening domestic mail.

Maintaining Contact with Customs and USPS

Port Directors and Supervisors should maintain close contact with their Customs and Postal Service counterparts to keep informed of any changes in mail handling procedures. Make sure that whenever procedures change, control is maintained over mail that is at risk for introducing pests and pathogens.

Methods and Procedures

If examining domestic parcels, see [General Procedures for Inspecting Domestic Mail](#) on **page 2-6-8**.

Step 1: Determining the Thoroughness of Inspection Required

Take into consideration the season of the year and the likelihood of host plants and pests being sent from the country of origin to assess the thoroughness of your inspection. Decide if the package needs to be x-rayed or inspected. Examine profiled parcels to determine their contents. Use these general guidelines to examine parcels:

1. Examine the written Customs Declaration on the outside of the package. Decide if there are articles inside the package that must be examined.
2. Pick up the parcel and evaluate the weight of the box against the items listed. Consider inspecting the parcel if the contents seem heavier or lighter than they should.
3. Evaluate the destination address. Military bases, local ethnic enclaves, and colleges and universities may have resident foreign nationals who may receive foodstuffs from home.
4. Give priority to inspecting parcels from high-risk countries.
5. Be especially alert when you know of local holidays or holidays in the parcel's country of origin.
6. Use canine teams to help select package for examination if available.

Also, if you encounter parcels from Canada, look for items which may be admissible into Canada but are **not** admissible into the United States.

Step 2: Checking for Permits

Check for permits as follows:

1. Look on the outside of the package for a PPQ Form 548 (green and yellow label), PPQ 550 (red and white label), or a VS Form 16-121 (yellow and green label). These permits allow for onward shipment **without** inspection to the address specified on the label.



Never open parcels bearing green and yellow labels addressed to Beltsville or those moving under Departmental Permit. The risk of opening these parcels may be great since they could be carrying prohibited plant materials that are attacked by serious plant pests in the country of origin.

2. Check local files or any national databases for permits and conditions on the permit.
3. Once you have the information on the conditions of import, release or control as specified on the permit.

Step 3: Opening Parcels

Open parcels safely. Follow the steps listed below which incorporate the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines for inspecting parcels to avoid airborne and direct skin contact pathogens:

- 1.** Turn off fans, portable heaters, and other equipment that may create air currents.
- 2.** Look out for suspicious parcels (see **Figure 2-6-2 on page 2-6-5**).
- 3.** Do **not** open suspicious parcels (see **Figure 2-6-2**).
- 4.** Put on latex gloves or other suitable hand protection before opening parcels.
- 5.** Undo parcels so that skin contact with the contents is minimized.
- 6.** Open parcels so you do **not** disturb or damage the contents.
- 7. Never** blow into parcels.
- 8.** Keep hands away from nose and mouth while opening and examining parcels.
- 9.** Remove items of agricultural interest for inspection.
- 10.** Wash hands thoroughly after handling parcels.

Characteristics of Suspicious Parcels
<p>Characteristics of suspicious parcels include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Crystals, powder, or powder-like residue on the parcel’s surface ◆ Suspicious or threatening language on the outside of the parcel ◆ Postmark that does not match the return address or there is no return address ◆ Excessive postage ◆ Restrictive endorsements such as “Personal” or “Confidential” ◆ Distorted handwriting, handwritten block-printed, or poorly-typed address ◆ Title but no name or an incorrect title ◆ Misspelled addressee’s name, title, or location ◆ Excessive tape or string ◆ Rigid, uneven, irregular, or lopsided parcel ◆ Soft spots, bulges, or excessive weight parcel ◆ Discoloration or an unusual odor

FIGURE 2-6-2 Characteristics of Suspicious Parcels

Step 4: Determining the Condition of the Shipment

Determine the action to take based on the condition of the shipment, using **Table 2-6-1**.

TABLE 2-6-1 Determine Action to Take Based on the Condition of the Shipment

If the condition of the parcel’s contents is:	Then:
Satisfactory	CONTINUE to Step 5: Determining Admissibility
Unsatisfactory as evidenced by decay or rotting of animal or plant materials ¹	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. REMOVE the questionable material 2. DISPOSE of the questionable material

¹ If the condition of the parcel is unsatisfactory due to **other than** plant or animal material, turn it over to USCS or USPS for disposition.

Step 5: Determining Admissibility

Categorize the article. Once you know the category, use one or more of the following documents to determine admissibility:

- ◆ *Animal Product Manual*
- ◆ Code of Federal Regulations (7CFR PARTS 300 to 399 and 9CFR Parts 1 to 199)
- ◆ Files containing local information

- ◆ *Plant Import: Nonpropagative Volume of Manuals*
- ◆ *Propagative Manual (M 319.37-A)*

Step 6: Inspecting the Parcel’s Contents

Inspect the contents of the parcel as follows:

- ◆ Look for pests (insects, snails, diseases, etc.)
- ◆ Isolate the pests and prepare them for submission or identification
- ◆ Remove any prohibited packing material or contaminants

Step 7: Taking Regulatory Action

Determine the correct regulatory action to take on parcels using **Table 2-6-2**.

TABLE 2-6-2 Determine the Correct Regulatory Action on Parcels

If the contents are:	And the remaining contents are:	Then:
Admissible or not regulated	→	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. STAMP ‘RELEASE’ and enter your badge number 2. RECONDITION the parcel and ALLOW it to proceed 3. CONTINUE to Step 11: Documenting Action Taken and Submitting Intercepted Pests
Inadmissible	Uncontaminated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. REMOVE the inadmissible material 2. COMPLETE PPQ Form 287, Mail Interception Notice and place in the parcel 3. RECONDITION the parcel and ALLOW it to proceed 4. CONTINUE to Step 8: Determining Whether to Issue a Civil Penalty
	Contaminated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. STAMP ‘REFUSED ENTRY’ and enter your badge number 2. RECONDITION the parcel 3. COMPLETE PPQ Form 287, Mail Interception Notice, and place in the parcel 4. RETURN the entire parcel to the sender 5. CONTINUE to Step 8: Determining Whether to Issue a Civil Penalty

Step 8: Determining Whether to Issue a Civil Penalty

To determine if you can issue a civil penalty, see [Table 2-6-3](#).

TABLE 2-6-3 Determine if You May Issue a Civil Penalty

If the parcel is:	Then:
From U.S. Military Mail or U.S. Mail en-route to the Mainland from Hawaii	CONTINUE to Step 10: Applying a Civil Penalty
Neither U.S. Military Mail nor U.S. Mail en-route to the Mainland from Hawaii	SKIP to Step 11: Documenting Action Taken and Submitting Intercepted Pests . You do not have the authority to issue a civil penalty

Step 9: Issuing Civil Penalty

TABLE 2-6-4 Criteria to Issue a Civil Penalty

If:	Then:
<p>All three of the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sender made a false declaration about the parcel's contents ◆ You have the legal authority to access the civil penalty for the illicit item ◆ Parcel was either U.S. Military Mail (APO) or Hawaiian Parcel Post destined to the U.S. mainland 	CONTINUE to the steps that follow
If one or more of the above bulleted criteria are unmet	SKIP to Step 11: Documenting Action Taken and Submitting Intercepted Pests . You do not have the authority to issue a civil penalty

Step 10: Applying a Civil Penalty

Follow the steps below to apply a civil penalty¹:

- ◆ Photocopy the applicable PPQ Form 287, Mail Interception Notice
- ◆ Complete PPQ Form 518, Notice of Violation

¹ For a more detailed description of civil penalties, see [Assessing Civil Penalties](#) in Reference section of *Clearing Passengers/Crew*.

- ◆ Complete an Officer's Statement. If the intercepted material was meat or a meat product, enter the following additional information:
 - ❖ Specify whether the product is canned, vacuum packed, cured, or dried
 - ❖ State why you assessed that the product is **not** shelf stable
 - ❖ State whether there is a certificate present
 - ❖ Identify whether the meat is of poultry, ruminant, or swine origin
- ◆ Include the actual label from the package, the green declaration form from the package, and a copy of the addressee's name and return address (if unable to provide originals, send photocopies)
- ◆ Send the complete case file to Investigative and Enforcement Services

For additional information on civil penalties, see [Assessing Civil Penalties](#) on **page 2-4-9**.

Step 11: Documenting Action Taken and Submitting Intercepted Pests

Document the action taken and submit intercepted pests as follows:

- ◆ Submit intercepted pests using PPQ Form 309A, Interception Record. Make sure you record 'Mail' in the "Where Intercepted" block of the form. (See [PPQ Form 309A, Interception Record](#) on **page A-1-55**.)
- ◆ Complete your local log if the parcel was released
- ◆ File a copy of the completed PPQ Form 287, Mail Interception Notice if articles were removed

General Procedures for Inspecting Domestic Mail

Summary of general procedures when inspecting domestic mail:

Step 1: Profile the packages.

Be suspicious of packages that rattle, are wet or greasy, or have an odor.

Step 2: Check for excess postage or no return address.

Step 3: Segregate packages you deem suspicious.

Use canines to confirm whether the suspicious package warrants further examination. Be alert to the harvesting season for the major fruits and vegetables in your area. Recognize that holidays provide a greater likelihood of prohibited items being mailed.

Step 4: Prepare a case file.

Collect descriptive and required information for each parcel that you would like to have opened. Collect affidavits and complete form(s) for a search warrant. If required, photograph the parcel.

Step 5: Present material and warrant to Judge or Federal Magistrate for signing.

Find out what the local court procedures are and follow them.

Step 6: Return to the Post Office and follow local USPS procedures for the intent of opening parcels and getting the required signatures.

Photograph the seized items and the address on the parcel.

Step 7: Place a copy of the warrant in the opened package(s).

Return to [Step 3: Opening Parcels](#) on [page 2-6-4](#).

Step 8: Return the appropriate paperwork to the Court.

Step 9: File warrants and PPQ Form 287, Mail Interception Notice, for future reference.

Airport Operations

General Procedures for Inspecting Domestic Mail
