



PRESENTATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: WOOD PACKAGING MATERIAL AND ISPM15

By Customs Advisor Directory

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1. Why is there concern about wood packaging material (WPM) in international trade?

WPM can harbor invasive pests and diseases that can be introduced to new environments, causing significant ecological and economic damage. History has shown that pests like the Asian longhorn beetle, emerald ash borer, and pine shoot beetle, often transported in WPM, have led to billions of dollars in losses due to tree damage and eradication efforts. Regulating WPM helps safeguard agriculture, natural resources, and prevents costly pest infestations.

2. What is ISPM15 and why is it important?

ISPM15 is the 15th International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures, developed by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), a United Nations organization. It specifically addresses the risk of pest introduction and spread via wood packaging material used in international trade. Compliance with ISPM15 provides a globally recognized standard for the treatment and marking of WPM, facilitating safe trade and minimizing the risk of harmful pests crossing borders. It also provides countries with a scientific basis for their regulations and protection against unfair trade claims.

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3. What types of wood packaging material are covered by ISPM15?

ISPM15 covers most solid wood packaging materials used to support, protect, or carry commodities. This includes items such as packing cases, boxes, crates, drums, pallets, box pallets, pallet collars, load boards, and dunnage (loose wood used for securing goods).

4. What types of wood packaging material are exempt from ISPM15?

Certain types of wood packaging are considered to have a lower pest risk and are exempt from ISPM15 requirements. These include processed wood products like plywood, oriented strand board (OSB), particle board, veneer, thin cut raw wood that is 6mm thick or less, barrels for wines and spirits, and gift boxes made from processed wood, sawdust, shavings, or cardboard (when used as packing material).

5. What are the key requirements for wood packaging material to be ISPM15 compliant?

To be ISPM15 compliant, solid wood packaging material must be debarked (with limited exceptions for small pieces of residual bark) and then treated using an approved method. The approved treatments are heat treatment (HT) to a core temperature of 56°C for at least 30 minutes, or fumigation with methyl bromide (MB). The treated WPM must also bear an official ISPM15 mark. This mark includes the IPPC symbol, a two-letter ISO country code, a unique producer/treatment provider code, and the treatment code (HT or MB).

6. What does the official ISPM15 mark look like and what are the requirements for it?

The official ISPM15 mark includes:

- The IPPC symbol (which resembles a stylized wheat stalk).
- A two-letter ISO country code (e.g., XX).
- A hyphen followed by a unique registration number assigned to the treatment facility (e.g., XXX).
- A two-letter treatment code (HT for heat treatment or MB for methyl bromide).

The mark must be legible, durable, visible (even in use), not transferable, and should not be hand-drawn or in red or orange colors. It must be placed within a square or rectangular border with a vertical line separating the IPPC logo from the code. Additional information outside this border is permissible.

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7. What happens if non-compliant wood packaging material is found during import inspections?

If WPM arriving in a country is not appropriately marked, the mark is not legible, or there is evidence of pest infestation, it is considered non-compliant with ISPM15. Consequences can include the shipment being held at the border, the non-compliant WPM being rejected, ordered to be re-exported, treated at the importer's expense (if allowed by the NPPO), or even destroyed. In some cases, the entire shipment associated with the non-compliant WPM might face delays or be re-exported.

8. Can ISPM15 marked wood packaging be reused, repaired, or remanufactured?

Yes, ISPM15 compliant WPM can be reused if it remains undamaged and uninfested. However, if WPM that has been ISPM15 compliant is repaired, remanufactured (e.g., by replacing a board), or altered with non-treated wood, it must be re-treated and re-marked to maintain compliance. If a repair involves adding non-compliant wood, the entire piece of WPM becomes non-compliant and needs to undergo the approved treatment and remarking process.

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