The Steel Import Licensing System:
Frequently Asked Questions

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The SIMA System

What does SIMA stand for? SIMA is the Steel Import Monitoring and Analysis (SIMA) system. It is made up of the steel import licensing system and the Steel Import monitor. Both portions can be accessed via http://ia.ita.doc.gov/steel/license.

Why was the Steel Import License created? The purpose of the licensing system is to provide statistical data on steel imports entering the United States seven weeks earlier than would otherwise be available. The licenses allow the Department of Commerce to collect early and accurate statistics. The data collected from the licenses is made available to the public in an aggregated form after enough information has been collected and it has been reviewed within the Department of Commerce.

What do you do with this information? Once a week the data submitted on the steel licenses are compiled, checked and used in the Steel Import Monitoring and Analysis (SIMA) system public monitor. The SIMA system displays a series of aggregate tables and graphs, which show imports of the steel mill products by country and type of steel product. The SIMA system has close to real-time data available for the public to analyze. Import Administration updates the SIMA system website on Tuesday evenings.

Information on Licenses

Who is required to fill out the license? Any business importing steel mill products covered under the licensing program. Importers, importing agents, or brokers may apply for the license. Please ensure that the contact person named on the license is knowledgeable about the license, should we have questions about it.

Do I need a license for each shipment? Yes, a license is required for each customs entry. You may include up to 10 products on one license if the importer, exporter, manufacturer and the country of origin and exportation are all of the same. Shipments with more than ten products need additional import licenses.

May foreign filers apply for a license? Yes, foreign filers may apply for a license as long as they have a valid U.S. street address.

Is there an application fee? No, the application is free of charge.

Which products are covered? Please refer to the Steel Mill Products included under SIMA (http://ia.ita.doc.gov/steel/license/SMP_byHTS-010109.pdf) link on SIMA website for the list of products currently subject to steel import monitoring and analysis (SIMA) system.

Do products entering into a Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) require a license? Yes, products entering an FTZ will require a license, but they do not need an additional license when leaving the FTZ for consumption in the US market.

Does a license for products entering into an FTZ zone expire? No, the licenses used for products entering into an FTZ do not expire.

Do U.S.-origin goods processed in a foreign country need a license when re-entered into the United States? This is a very complex issue that is dependent upon the good and the extent to which it undergoes further processing. All questions regarding U.S. goods returned and country-of-origin designation should be raised with your local Customs import specialist.

The ruling states that informal entries will not require a license. On what basis is "informal entry" defined? Informal entry as defined by Customs: see 19 CFR 143.21-143.28. The general value limit for informal entries is $2,000, but may be less in certain instances. If you have specific questions, you should contact your local Customs import specialist.

At what point in the importation process must I fill out the license? You must fill out the license prior to completing the Customs import summary documentation (CF-7501); you will need the license number (issued by Commerce) to complete the Customs Entry documentation. The license may be filled out up to 60 days prior to the date of importation. You will need a username prior to applying for the license (also issued by Commerce).

How long is the license valid? The license may be filed up to 60 days prior to the expected date of entry and will be valid for 75 days.

What is the first step for applying for a license? First, you need to create an account at: http://hq-web03.ita.doc.gov/steel/steelLogin.nsf/newaccount?openform.

User Accounts/Profiles

I had a user ID under the old SIMA system. Do I still need to create a new account? Yes. We require new and existing steel license applicants to create an account with the updated licensing system that began March 2, 2009. Please create your account at: http://hq-web03.ita.doc.gov/steel/steelLogin.nsf/newaccount?openform.

Do I need a password for my account? Yes. Passwords are required to log on to the system to access your account and to apply for licenses. You will receive a password when you register for a user ID, which you can then change upon logging in. Passwords must be between 6 and 12 characters long and contain lower case characters (a - z), a numeric character (0 - 9), and a special character (! @ # $ & *).

What if I forget my username or password? In case of a forgotten username or password there are helpful links on the left-hand menu of the licensing system homepage (http://hq-web03.ita.doc.gov/steel/steelLogin.nsf). In order to retrieve a lost or forgotten username or password, you will be required to provide basic information associated with the account, as well as the answers to the preselected security questions.

What is my user profile? It is a record of your username, name, and contact information obtained from your registration. It is used to fill out the top portion of each new license for which you apply. Please keep your contact information updated. You may at any time update your profile, by clicking on "Update Profile" after logging into the system.

What is an Employer Identification Number? Your Employer Identification Number (EIN) is also known as the Federal Tax or IRS identification number, and is used to identify a business entity.

What is the alternate email option? If you enter an alternate email address, that address is copied on emails sent to your account. It is not used to access your account. You will use the primary email address to log in to the system.

Why do I have to enter my e-mail address twice in order to sign in to the system? The first entry is designed to see if your user ID is in the system. Once that is confirmed, the second entry will give you access to the system.

Why are there Outstanding Licenses listed on my account home page? "Outstanding Licenses" are any licenses that have been flagged as potentially containing errors. You will receive an email addressing the issue. If you see a "No documents found" message then you don't have any outstanding licenses to address.

Creating a License

How do I apply for a license? Once you have logged in to your account, please select "New License" from the home page menu options. A tutorial (http://ia.ita.doc.gov/steel/license/SIMA-Tutorial-012109.pdf) with step-by-step instructions to guide you through the license application process is available among the menu options at the top of the page. Additional information for filling out the license application is available by clicking on the help button (http://hq-web03.ita.doc.gov/steel/steellicense.nsf/help?OpenForm) located on the license form.

Under which HTS code would my product be classified? For classification questions, please contact the Import Specialist in the port where the steel products will arrive. Please refer to the US Customs & Border Protection's website (http://www.cbp.gov/) for the contact information for a particular port of entry.

Which value should I enter under "Customs Value"? As the instructions indicate, that value is to be the customs entered value (which does not include duties, brokerage fees or freight), not the invoice value.

How exactly is "Manufacturer" defined? Manufacturer refers to the producer of the steel product. The license requires only the name of the manufacturer; no manufacturer identification codes are required. The Customs MID refers to the manufacturer or shipper. You may list multiple manufacturers or leave the field blank if the manufacturer is unknown.

What if I am unsure as to the manufacturer or origin of the steel I would like to import? Filers must provide the country of origin/exporting country information when filling out the license form; however, filers may mark "unknown" in the manufacturer field.

May I fill out one license application for multiple covered products? A single license application may contain multiple products if the importer, exporter, manufacturer and the country of origin and exportation are all of the same; however, if any of the above information differs, separate license applications must be used. Applicants may include no more than 10 products on a license.

My records show a different unit value. Why is the unit value automatically populated? The license application automatically calculates the unit value per metric ton for each product based on the entered volume and customs value. Please check to make sure that values entered are correct, and that the volume entered is in kilograms.

How long do I have to wait to receive my license number? There is no waiting period; the license number will be generated immediately upon submitting the information. Afterwards you will receive an e-mail confirmation with your license number. Should the Department find an error on your license, a SIMA team member will contact you for confirmation and/or correction.

How many digits long is the license number (I need to know to re-program my ABI interface)? In the new system, you will notice that license numbers will be 9 characters long and will include both numbers and letters. An example will be 7N5Rxxxxx.

What do I need to do if I get a blank screen applying for a license or if I do not receive your e-mail confirmation? Please do not click the submit button more than once (this may create duplicates). First, go into the "View/Update License" feature to see whether your license has gone through. If you don't see it on your list of licenses, a SIMA team member will be happy to assist you. You may contact SIMA by phone: (202)482-2105 or by e-mail steel_license@ita.doc.gov.

How do I obtain a Re-Usable Low Value License Number? If you have a shipment in which the portion covered by the steel licensing requirement is less than $250, then you are eligible to use a Low Value License Number for that entry. Please fill out the form (http://ia.ita.doc.gov/steel/license/Low-Value-Steel-License.pdf) to obtain a low-value license number and fax (202-501-1377) or e-mail it to us. If you would like further information on this option, please contact us.

How do I print my license? After creating a license, you will receive a confirmation page with a link to open the license in a printer-friendly format. You may also print out those licenses up to 90 days old located in your license history. Simply click on "Update/View License", select the license you wish to print, and click on the "Printer Friendly" button.

Modifying/Cancelling a License

What if I discover an error after I submit the license? After logging in to your account, an option to correct a license is available on the Welcome page and also among the menu options on the left-hand side. Simply click on the "Update/View License" link to view a list of your past licenses (up to 90 days old). Click on the license you need to update, and then click on the "Correct License" button, to then make changes, and submit changes.

The information on the license should match the information presented on the CF-7501 as closely as possible; this includes the value and volume of the shipment, the expected date of importation, and the customs district of entry. You will receive an email showing the corrected information.

How exactly do I cancel my license? After logging in to your account, an option to cancel a license is available on the Welcome page and also among the menu options on the left-hand side. Simply click on the "Update/View License" link to view a list of your past licenses (up to 90 days old). Click on the license you need to cancel, and then click on the "Cancel License" button to cancel the license. You will receive an email confirming that cancelation.

Templates

What is the template feature? Compliance with the import license program is extremely important and everyone importing covered products must, by law, fill out a license. We would like to make the process as convenient as possible. If you find yourself repeatedly filling out recurring licenses, we will recommend you to use the template feature in our system. Templates allow you to store the importer & exporter names, manufacturer, countries of origin & exportation, expected port of entry, and up to 10 HTS codes.

What happened to the saved templates I used under the old system? Unfortunately as part of the switchover of the system, templates previously created will no longer be available. However, the new templates system makes it easier to remember which templates you use by allowing you to name them. You may enter names specific to products, shipments, clients, or any other way that works for you. You may also update or delete templates from the new system.

How do I use a template after I created and saved it? You will be able to create a license from a created and saved template by clicking on "Access/View Template", and then by clicking on the name of the template you saved. After you click on the template name, you will see a button that says "New License". Once you click on that button, a license application will appear with the saved information populated into the fields. You will then submit the application just as if you were submitting a new one. Instructions may be found on pages 29-31 of the tutorial (http://hq-web03.ita.doc.gov/steel/steelLogin.nsf/Tutorial?OpenForm).

How do I modify a template? Select "Access/View Template" from your account menu options to bring up your template history page and select the template you wish to modify. Next, click on the "Correct" button to make changes, click "Continue" to verify your changes, and then click "Submit."

How do I delete a template? Click on the "Access/View Template" link from your account menu options to bring up your template history. Check the box next to the template you wish to cancel and then click "Delete." If you deleted a template, you may select it and click "Undelete." If you click "Empty Trash Can", those templates will be permanently deleted.

Additional Questions/Contact us

What should I do when contacted about a steel license? If you are contacted by the SIMA team regarding duplicate licenses or possible errors in the license it is critical that you respond immediately so that SIMA keeps its data as up to date as possible. Please respond to any correspondence to indicate if there was a correction or if the license is accurate.

What should I do if I need to fill out a license urgently and there is a problem with the Internet? Please contact us first if you are having trouble accessing our site. In instances where the system has gone down the Department is usually able to get the site running within the same business day, so we ask that you remain patient. However, in emergency situations, you may print out the PDF license application form and fax it to: (202) 501-1377. Please make sure all forms are typed.

Who should we contact with additional questions? The steel licensing team is happy to answer your questions: (202) 482-2105 or by email: steel_license@ita.doc.gov.

Additionally, there are updated instructions available once you log on as a registered user and are prepared to fill out a license. Please refer to the instructions on our website (http://ia.ita.doc.gov/steel/license/forminstructions.html) on how to fill out the form.

Any suggestions? As always the SIMA team is happy to hear from you. Please feel free to e-mail us any comments/suggestions you may have regarding the SIMA license system or monitor. The office is staffed during normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm EST).