

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Office of Inspector General

**Audit of Screening Trucks Carrying
Canadian Municipal Solid Waste
(Unclassified Summary)**



Office of Audits

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Homeland
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Preface

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) was established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (*Public Law 107-296*) by amendment to the Inspector General Act of 1978. This is one of a series of audit, inspection, and special reports prepared as part of our DHS oversight responsibility to promote economy, effectiveness, and efficiency within the department.

This report presents a public summary of our limited official use report assessing the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection's process for screening trucks carrying Canadian municipal solid waste. It is based on interviews with employees and officials of relevant agencies and institutions, direct observations, and a review of applicable documents.

The recommendation contained in this report has been developed according to the best knowledge available to our office, and has been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. It is our hope that this report will result in more effective, efficient, and economical operations. We express our appreciation to all of those who contributed to the preparation of this report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard L. Skinner".

Richard L. Skinner
Inspector General

UNCLASSIFIED SUMMARY

The greater Toronto, Canada area has been shipping municipal solid waste (MSW) to Michigan landfills for disposal since 1998. During calendar year 2004, Michigan landfills received approximately 100,000 truckloads of Canadian MSW, an 8 percent increase over calendar year 2003. Another 10,000 shipments of MSW enter the U.S. through 9 other ports of entry (POE) that accept Canadian and Mexican MSW. Over the past two years, trucks carrying Canadian MSW were found to contain medical waste, illegal drugs, and illegal currency. At the request of Senators Levin and Stabenow and Representative Dingell, our office reviewed the effectiveness of the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) screening of trucks carrying Canadian MSW.

CBP has the authority¹ to search all persons, baggage, and merchandise arriving in the U.S. to detect and seize smuggled instruments of terror, and other contraband, such as illegal drugs. CBP carries out its responsibility by using screening equipment and physical inspections. For example, every passenger vehicle and truck entering the U.S. at the Detroit and Port Huron POE pass through a radiation portal monitor (RPM), and selected trucks receive a Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System (VACIS)² screening.

Our audit work was conducted at CBP Headquarters in Washington, DC, and at the ports of Detroit and Port Huron, Michigan. We evaluated CBP entry and screening procedures and observed CBP personnel implementing those procedures at Michigan landfills and at the ports of Detroit and Port Huron. We also gathered and analyzed information regarding techniques for screening MSW from other northern and southern border ports. In addition, we made site visits to three MSW transfer stations in the greater Toronto area.

Improvements are needed in the inspection process. For example, the ports vary in how they select and inspect cargo and conduct their VACIS examinations. In addition, there is no Centralized Examination Station in Michigan.

We are recommending that the Commissioner of CBP conduct a risk analysis and develop minimum requirements for selecting and inspecting trucks carrying Canadian MSW.

¹ 19 USC § 1467; 19 CFR § 162.6.

² A VACIS machine uses gamma rays to produce a visual presentation of a truck's contents. The image is similar to an x-ray.

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