



Shipping Port Security

U.S. shipping ports handle a range of cargo including legitimate hazardous material such as chemicals and radioactive material and must take actions to ensure the safe handling and security of such material while on site.

Ports also have to guard against smuggled or unwanted radioactive material entering the U.S. Each year, millions of tons of scrap metal, semi-finished metal, and metal products are imported to the U.S. Ports must ensure that these metal products are not contaminated with radioactive material. Also, cargo containers must be checked for radioactive material that could pose a potential threat to our national security.

As a result of the events of September 11, 2001, all levels of government implemented additional actions to ensure port security and to minimize the threats. That included potential threats posed by radioactive material. The Federal government increased the licensing requirements on the import and export of radioactive material.

The Federal government also developed and implemented an enhanced strategy to identify, target, and inspect cargo containers *before* they reach U.S. ports. Officials prescreen all cargo, and any shipment that poses a potential threat is physically inspected with radiation detectors either prior to or upon arrival.

The U.S. government created a partnership with over 7,000 businesses, including most of the largest U.S. importers. Under this partnership program, legitimate companies that conduct regular business with the U.S. have increased their own security to prevent terrorists from infiltrating their shipments. This system of prevention, early detection and immediate action helps keep our ports safe from terrorist threats.

Radiation detectors used at ports include:

- **Personal Radiation Detector:** a small, but highly sensitive device that sounds an alarm when radiation is detected. More than 10,500 are carried by federal officers and agents at U.S. ports of entry and highway checkpoints.
- **Radiation Portal Monitor:** a non-intrusive way to screen trucks, cargo containers, rail cars, and passenger vehicles for radiation coming from nuclear devices, dirty bombs, special nuclear materials, natural sources, and isotopes commonly used in medicine and industry. The government plans to expand upon the existing 473 monitors.
- **Radiation Isotope Identifiers:** a hand-held instrument capable of detecting emissions from radioactive sources, including nuclear, medical and industrial isotopes. Security officers use this device to determine the exact identity of a radioactive source that has triggered an alarm.
- **Large-scale Gamma-ray/X-ray Imaging Systems:** an imaging systems that use radiation to reflect images of the contents of a cargo container, rail car, vehicle or trailer-truck.

Who is protecting you

The States

Each State in the United States has one or more programs to address port safety and security.

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)

The NRC establishes regulations for the licensing of the sale, use and disposal of radioactive material. Only the NRC can grant a license for the import and export of radioactive materials.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

The DHS Office of Customs and Border Protection operates programs to monitor U.S. Ports of Entry for radioactive material that could pose a threat to national security. The DHS Coast Guard is responsible for investigating any ship at sea that has been identified as potentially posing a radiation threat.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

EPA's Clean Materials Program works with other government agencies to ensure that scrap metal, semi-finished metal and metal products are not contaminated with radioactivity. EPA has installed 5 monitors at U.S. ports and has turned the monitors over to the private sector to continue the installations. EPA may respond if radioactive material that poses a potential threat is detected at a U.S. Port of Entry.

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)

The DOT Maritime Administration is responsible for the U.S. waterborne shipping transportation system including port, ship and cargo security.

What can you do to protect yourself

Stringent rules apply to the import and export of radioactive material through ports. Improved technology continues to enhance public safety through early detection and prevention.

Resources

You can explore this radiation source further through the resources at the following URL:
<http://www.epa.gov/radtown/port-security.html#resources>

We provide these resources on-line rather than here so we can keep the links up-to-date.