



Personally Identifiable Information (PII) Backgrounder

Distribution of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) to Third Party Vessel Manifest Companies

Over the past several years, IAM has been sounding the alarm that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has been selling the personally identifiable information (PII) of private citizens, U.S. Military Service Members and U.S. Government Employees moving to or from the United States. CBP is permitted to sell this information through 19 CFR 103.31. Ostensibly, the purpose of this regulation is to provide the shipping public with the ability to access and examine vessel manifests and summary statistical reports of U.S. inbound and outbound shipments. IAM does not disagree with this purpose but feels the sale of PII is beyond the stated purpose of this regulation.

CBP sells this information to Vessel Manifest Information companies who, in turn, publish it by paid subscription online. An example of a third party vessel manifest company is [Import Genius](#). Understandably, many household goods shippers are upset when they find their name and shipment information freely available on the Internet without having given their consent.

While this regulation also details how a person may request confidential treatment for their shipments, it is a cumbersome process and confidentiality is not automatically granted. Furthermore, there are no efforts by CBP to educate the shipping public that their private information can be sold and published online.

In response, IAM has been informing our members on how to properly educate their clients on this regulation and what steps they must take to request confidentiality. IAM has also developed an automated web form on our website to request confidentiality in a much more efficient manner.

Although the automated web form is an effective intermediate solution, IAM contends that the PII of U.S. Citizens, Military Service Members, and Government Employees should not be sold without their consent. Since this is both a safety and privacy issue, IAM recommends that CBP exclude PII for household goods shipments when the data is sold to the shipping public. At this point, it remains an opt-out process and far too many people are unaware that their private data is being published on the Internet without their consent.

CBP and IAM have met on this issue and CBP has identified that they require a technical fix to provide their electronic system with the capability to exclude PII for household goods shipments. In addition, CBP would also require a change to the statutory language that mandates the distribution of this information.



International Association of Movers

5904 Richmond Highway

Suite 404

Alexandria, Virginia 22303-1875

T 703.317.9950

F 703.317.9960

info@iamovers.org

www.iamovers.org

IAM will continue to take steps to protect the American consumer from identity theft and provide them with peace of mind when moving internationally.

Ongoing Activity by IAM to Address this Issue

CBP has indicated their willingness over the past few months to work more closely with IAM staff, to ensure that the service members are aware of, and understand the easiest route to conceal their personal information.

IAM has also met with counsel for the Senate Armed Services Committee, who have also expressed their concern that a service member's PII is, unbeknownst to them, packaged and sold to data mining and solicitation firms. Committee counsel is currently reviewing a draft letter from Chairman Levin, to the SDDC, acknowledging that this issue exists, and their desire to see better protections offered for the shipper.

For more information on this important issue, contact Brian Limperopulos, IAM's Director of Programs, at (703) 317-9950 or brianl@iamovers.org.