



Fact Sheet

Radiation Detection Protocols

To address radiological risks, CBP employs several types of radiation detection equipment in its operations at ports of entry to detect and resolve any security or safety risks that are identified with inbound travelers and cargo.

If radiation is encountered, CBP has protocols in place to isolate the affected traveler or cargo and perform more detailed inspection to determine the level and type of radiation present.

CBP science officers are available 24-hours/day, 365-days/year who have expertise in the analysis of radiation detector data and in assessing the risk of radiation present.

Aircraft Passengers and Crew

In the air environment, CBP frontline personnel are equipped with personnel radiation detectors (PRD), and all airports have more sensitive handheld equipment to determine the type of radiation encountered.

To identify the source of a PRD alert, CBP Officers use handheld Radiation Isotope Identification Devices (RIID) to isolate the source and determine the type and level of radiation present.

CBP will focus on the health concerns of any traveler exhibiting signs of radiation sickness and refer the traveler to HHS and CDC for examination. In these cases, the admissibility decision for non-US persons can be deferred until the health issues are addressed.

Air Baggage and General Cargo

CBP scans passenger baggage and general cargo for the presence of radiation. If radiation is encountered, CBP has protocols in place to isolate the affected baggage to perform a more detailed inspection to determine if level and type of radiation. Cargo will be released if the level of radiation present is determined to be low and the isotope does not present a concern.

Baggage, even with low levels of radiation, will be held to avoid any potential cross-contamination of the airport terminal. CBP will work on a case by case basis with the carrier and local authorities to determine when the baggage can be released or if decontamination is warranted.

If the level of radiation present is determined to be high, then the baggage or cargo will be held for decontamination procedures in accordance with local protocols.

Express Consignment Cargo (UPS/FedEx)

Since 2005, FedEx and UPS have had Memoranda of Understanding with CBP to scan all shipments prior to departure for the U.S.

FedEx and UPS are responsible for resolving radiation detection alarms through established protocols. Both companies maintain a zero tolerance policy on transporting packages that are determined to have radiation contamination. Contaminated parcels are returned to the shipper.

Maritime Containerized Cargo

Containerized cargo arriving in the U.S. via sea is screened at the port of arrival for elevated radiation levels using large scale radiation detectors.

If radiation is encountered, CBP has protocols in place to isolate the cargo and to perform a more detailed inspection to determine if level and type of radiation.

In the vast majority of cases, the radiation detected is from naturally-occurring sources common in many commodities (such as fertilizers, ceramics, and concrete).

Special Procedures – Food

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is the primary authority that regulates the safety of food products imported into the U.S., while the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Food Safety Inspection Service (USDA/FSIS) also plays a key role on meat, eggs, milk and other products. CBP coordinates with FDA and USDA/FSIS on proper responses and guidance for food shipments.

Cargo shipments containing food undergo the same radiation detection scanning procedures as those that govern other cargo shipments.