

## NEWS IN BRIEF

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### CBP has All Ports of Entry Operational

We are receiving several inquiries about the status of services by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for the processing of entries and the release of cargo in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Right now, there are no ports closed and CBP is working all cargo, including exams.

At the ocean terminals there are shift closures for cargo pick-up due to the low volumes that have been arriving, but nothing is closed. President Trump has closed the northern border for all personal traffic, but trucks moving cargo are considered to be essential services.

The bridges are open for import and export cargo and CBP is currently staffed. This includes service providers such as forwarders, trucking companies, customs brokers and ILWU longshoremen who are also considered to be essential service providers.

The President is considering having similar closures on the Southern border. CBP has plans to deal with any office that may be challenged by an influx of personnel either being directly affected by COVID-19 or those who may have to provide childcare when schools close. CBP is capable of processing entries remotely and other offices are able to support any Port that is facing challenges.

Most Import Specialists at the Centers of Excellence are already working from home. CBP is committed to keeping the trade industry informed of any changes.

### Port Slowdowns

Most terminals in Los Angeles and Long Beach, CA are having a few shifts closed each week. Next week, the Port of Miami Terminal Operating Company (POMTOC) will have terminals open for only 3 out of 5 days due to the reduction of sailings. Today the Port of Houston announced that there has been a reported case of COVID-19 in a port employee.

All vessel, yard and gate operations at the Barbours Cut and Bayport Container Terminals are closed until further notice. Expectations are that they will reopen by next week. We can expect similar temporary closures if more positive tests come back. The official announcement from Houston can be found by clicking [here](#)

### Canada Ratifies USMCA

On Friday, March 13th, the Canadian Parliament ratified the United States-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement (USMCA). Now that all 3 countries have ratified the agreement it can go into effect on the first day of the third month after the final ratification (90th day). The USMCA can go into effect on June 1, 2020; however, all 3 countries must work on creating uniform regulations and setting up commitments (such as rules of origin in place and setting up labor courts in Mexico) before they can certify that the agreement is ready to enter into force.

In the United States there are calls asking for the agreement to not go into effect immediately on June 1st. Some automotive

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industries are asking for more time to allow their supply chains produce the Mexican parts needed for current production, in order to qualify cars made in Mexico as duty-free treatment under USMCA.

### **New Exclusion Announcements**

Some new exclusions came out this past week. On March 12th there was an announcement with new exclusions for List 3 that can be by clicking [here](#)

This first announcement of exclusions for List 4a came out on March 10th. It was issued to allow relief for imports of medical equipment to help deal with the pandemic. The list can be found in a Federal Register Notice by clicking [here](#)

A second set of exclusions for List 4a was issued on March 12th, the focus was also on medical services and supplies. The list can be found by clicking [here](#)

### **Second List of Exclusions Due to Expire on March 25 – Some Have Been Extended**

Exclusions that are granted by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) expire after one year. The second list of exclusions that were granted last year will expire on March 25, 2020. The USTR accepts and reviews petitions to extend certain exclusions on expiring lists. The USTR has granted extended exclusions on 2 full HTSUS numbers and 9 extensions to specific items listed under their named HTSUS numbers. The list can be found on the USTR's website by clicking [here](#)



By **Todd Boice**, President