

A Fresh Look at Security Guidelines

While the trade community was knee deep in its work last year of implementing trade modernization through the transition to ACE, CBP also took the opportunity to “modernize” its guidelines on physical security at CBP bonded facilities. CBP’s updated “Physical Security Guidelines for CBP Bonded Facilities” document replaces the 1972 Treasury Decision (T.D. 72-56) that has long been part of the CBP FTZ Manual appendix and used by CBP and zone operators as guidance on physical security standards. The changes included in the new security document more closely align the bonded facilities requirements with security measures common in CBP’s C-TPAT requirements.

The new guidelines incorporate and expand on the security areas covered in the original T.D., providing an articulation of comprehensive security standards while allowing for a determination of how to meet those standards based on the particular circumstances of the facility. The CBP memorandum to field personnel regarding the updated guidelines reiterates that the guidelines are recommendations only and continue to allow for the discretion of the local port director and personnel based on local experiences and standards to determine if security is acceptable at a facility.

One of the major changes in the updated guidelines is the requirement that the company have a comprehensive written “security plan” that is reviewed at least annually to verify that procedures and processes are implemented and effective. The guideline also notes that facilities should have a team responsible for security with a designated leader having accountability to a senior executive. Additional changes include new guidelines that expand conveyance security considerations, providing an outline of elements that comprise a sound conveyance security process, and expanded topics for security threat and awareness training.

Although many zones have high-level security information included in their FTZ procedures manuals or in other documentation, the new CBP guidelines would seem to indicate a need for zones to create a separate comprehensive and detailed FTZ security document/manual that provides a detailed description of the facility security and implementation of processes to support the required security measures. Additionally, since over time adherence to previous established processes can become less stringent, a review of both the security manual and attendant processes should become part of a zone’s annual internal audit review.

As CBP continues to standardize its approach to conducting FTZ spot checks and audits, it is likely that a review of security standards as outlined in the new CBP guidelines may become a component of such reviews and audits. Zones should be prepared to provide documented evidence that security requirements are being met including the existence of a written security plan and a designated team that administers it.

Whether yours is a long-standing zone project or a recently activated facility, a review of current zone security measures based on the new CBP security guidelines is advised.

Rockefeller Group Foreign Trade Zone Services stands ready to assist your company with the preparation of a FTZ security manual or an assessment of security processes to meet the updated guidelines.