



Informal Entry (entering the US) versus a Customs Broker

There are two types of entries into the US. The first is a formal entry, done through a Customs Broker or Customs Broker/Registered Importer. These moves are mostly commercial in nature for example an American buying a Canadian vehicle or a Canadian car dealer shipping a car to a US auction and where a vehicle is non compliant. In these instances, proof of Customs clearance is provided to the Customs Broker. An informal entry covers a myriad of situations where the vehicle is considered unaccompanied personal goods presented to US Customs for free entry using a 3299 Form.

The informal entry creates a lot of challenges for us as the carrier. The paperwork must be letter perfect, which it seldom is and we are left to the mercy of the individual Customs Agent. While the official Customs rules state that the Agent must stamp the 3299 as proof of entry, in practice this seldom happens. The individual Agent does not appear to want to take the responsibility for wrong entry knowing that there is another check when the owner tries to register the vehicle. Of course at the base of all this is the desire to collect any applicable tax. In our experience there is a problem in less than 5% of exports. When the registration office insists of proof of Customs clearance, the owner then must go to the nearest Customs office and in all cases, in our experience the 3299 gets stamped and the vehicle can then be registered.

As the carrier, our role is to insure safe delivery of the vehicle to it's final destination. We will attempt to clear your vehicle either as an informal entry or through any Customs Broker you choose. However, while we do our best to get stamped proof of clearance on informal entries, it ultimately is an issue between the owner of the vehicle and US Customs.

We are currently working with Customs to find a method to acquire official proof of entry for all informal entries and it's possible to have this resolved in the near future.