

# Position Classification Standard for Customs Inspection Series, GS-1890

## Table of Contents

<b>SERIES DEFINITION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>THE INSPECTION PROCESS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>AUTHORIZED TITLES .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CLASSIFICATION FACTORS.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>NOTES TO USERS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>OPM BENCHMARKS .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>CUSTOMS INSPECTOR GS-1890-05 .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>CUSTOMS INSPECTOR GS-1890-07 .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>CUSTOMS INSPECTOR GS-1890-09 .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>CUSTOMS INSPECTOR GS-1890-11 .....</b>	<b>22</b>

## **SERIES DEFINITION**

This series includes positions that involve inspection work in the enforcement and administration of laws governing the importation or exportation of merchandise. The work requires knowledge of laws, regulations, policies, and procedures concerning the entry, examination, classification, and release of merchandise; ability to obtain data about the description, characteristics, value, and country of origin of merchandise by questioning people, examining merchandise, and reviewing documents; ability to search baggage, persons, cargo, and carriers for contraband; ability to make sound decisions to admit and to hold or release merchandise; and sound judgment in detaining and apprehending persons at the point of entry who are violating customs or other laws.

This standard supersedes the standard for the Customs Inspection Series, GS-1890, issued in February 1961.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Customs inspectors are charged by law with a vital role in the administration and enforcement of laws and perform an integral part of the total enforcement functions of the Bureau of Customs. All goods coming into the United States are subject to customs inspection whether they are presented for entry as baggage, mail, or cargo. Inspectors are concerned with baggage and cargo (but not mail) at customs ports located at land borders, air, water, and land terminals and at ports abroad where preflight inspections occur. Inspectors perform a variety of duties involved in the control of imports and exports to detect and prevent attempted smuggling and fraud, to assure collection of revenue for importations that are dutiable, and to assure that importations are admissible under various provisions of customs laws and those of other agencies.

Inspectors are responsible for assuming custody of imports and baggage and releasing foreign goods and baggage to the importer or traveler after the inspection establishes that various requirements are met. Inspectors are as signed primary jurisdiction for carrying out all or most customs functions for several types of importations such as those for personal use, for some temporary purposes, and of small commercial shipments not exceeding the amount that can be entered on an informal entry or baggage declaration. For importations of cargo in large commercial quantities, inspectors determine that the importer's invoice is accurate and complete before releasing the merchandise. This responsibility is particularly important for cargo released on immediate delivery permits, for which formal entry will be made later. Once released, verification that such merchandise was truly and correctly invoiced is not feasible. The inspector's certification becomes the legal basis for determining what the shipment contained.

All subsequent action is based on this certification. Inspectors are specifically charged with responsibility to:

- Pass free-of-duty merchandise;
- Grant proper exemptions and allowances to travelers;
- Classify, assess, and collect duties and taxes on merchandise for personal use without limitation as to value, and on commercial merchandise up to the value that can be entered on an informal entry;
- Examine samples of commercial shipments to certify that the cargo is truly and correctly invoiced and that the description is adequate for classification and value determinations;
- Report the quantity and condition of cargo on manifests and invoices for collection of revenue and statistical purposes;
- Release imports and exports with proper permit and authorization;
- Prepare entries or inspect and examine merchandise for various temporary importations; and
- Provide and obtain information about admittance, inspection, and, release of importations to travelers, importers, carrier and terminal staff, and others.

Inspectors have major responsibility for enforcement of customs laws and those of other agencies. In baggage inspection work they assume the prime enforcement responsibility, and serve a major enforcement role in cargo inspection work. Their enforcement activities are geared to such important items as the prevention of smuggling; protection of the revenue; and certification of compliance of merchandise with various requirements or importation, release, and admission into commerce. Enforcement responsibilities pervade most of the duties performed by inspectors such as examining merchandise, searching baggage, packages, vehicles, etc., and reviewing documents relative to the purchase, shipment, bill of lading, etc. Inspectors are specifically charged with such major enforcement responsibilities as following:

- Deny admission to prohibited merchandise;
- Deny admission to or as sure that restricted merchandise meets various conditions necessary for importation or exportation;
- Detect smuggling of undeclared merchandise to avoid duty or in violation of laws;
- Prevent fraud involved in undervaluing, false invoicing, or misrepresenting of merchandise;
- Search suspected smugglers, including travelers, crew members, and visitors to carriers; and take violators into custody;

- Seize contraband, and when violations are of a criminal nature, seize the conveyance in which it is found;
- Hold merchandise for inspection or examination by other agencies as required;
- Assure that importations meet various requirements for admission into commerce;
- Deny permit to carriers to discharge cargo unless required manifests of all cargo or other acceptable documents are provided or compliance requirements are met;
- Retain customs custody of merchandise until all inspection, examination, appraisalment, collection of duty and taxes, and all import requirements are met and permit for release is issued;
- Insure accuracy of weighing, gauging, sampling, etc., of merchandise when duty is based on weight, volume, test or other physical examination.

Inspectors must have a knowledge of the overall customs clearance processes and the various actions required for different procedures. Inspectors must have the knowledge and ability to judge when discrepancies and violations involve (1) honest error or misinformation, or (2) a petty violation, or (3) an attempt at smuggling or fraud. Inspectors are expected to recognize when travelers and importers are misled about what can be brought in "duty free" or are ignorant of prohibitions or restrictions.

They must be alert at all times, however, to techniques used in concealment of narcotics, undeclared merchandise, and other contraband, and in undervaluation and falsification of invoices. The inspector, as the only Government official who sees the merchandise, serves as guardian against the influx of such potentially dangerous goods as narcotics, pornographic material, and prohibited products that could endanger domestic plants and animals. They use information obtained in "lookouts" and reports as well as their own personal knowledge to spot evidence of importations either shipped from, consigned to, or scheduled to be transported by, persons or companies known to be engaged in or suspected of smuggling, fraud, or other violations.

Inspectors must use sound judgment and act judiciously in dealing with individuals to assure that their rights and personal dignity are preserved.

## **THE INSPECTION PROCESS**

Customs inspectors perform various combinations of inspection functions described in this section. The two major assignments involve control and inspection of baggage and inspection and control of cargo. The other functions, namely: examination of merchandise, informal entry, export inspection, and boarding vessels and aircraft, are performed mostly as a part of these two major types of assignment. This discussion covers duties and responsibilities of trainee and full performance level inspectors as found at most ports. Inspectors at some ports may perform very

limited portions of these functions, others may perform most of the functions discussed herein, or additional types of work such as serving as a member of a special investigating team. Since the variety of special assignments may vary greatly, they are not described in detail in this discussion of the typical inspection process.

### *Baggage Inspection*

"Baggage inspection" as used throughout the standard applies to inspection work in connection with baggage, personal and household effects, temporary importations, gifts, etc., accompanying travelers using commercial or private conveyances. Inspectors carry out a wide range of responsibilities in applying regulations and procedures for many kinds of goods accompanying all types of travelers (e. g., returning residents, immigrants, tourists, diplomatic personnel, crew members, commuters, businessmen). At many stations the volume of traffic requires quick decisions based on skillful questioning and observation to ascertain when a search is required to detect possible smuggling, or examination is needed to appraise merchandise, or special clearance is required to admit merchandise or to allow exemptions, etc. Inspectors apply sound judgment in performing such duties as:

- Question travelers and review documents as appropriate to determine: (1) residence for customs purposes; (2) what articles were acquired abroad; (3) the value of such articles; and (4) presence of prohibited or restricted items;
- Inform travelers of customs requirements and travelers' obligations in declaring articles acquired;
- Determine need for perfunctory or thorough examination of baggage, vehicles, persons;
- Grant customs clearance to travelers entitled to free entry;
- Determine what special exemption privileges are appropriate and personal exemptions to be allowed;
- Examine baggage and commercial importations to detect contraband, prohibited or restricted items, and undeclared or under valuated items;
- Pass all merchandise and items which he determines are free of duty;
- Determine allowances for wear and tear of items purchased and used abroad;
- Classify and determine dutiable value of, duty, and taxes to be collected on (1) articles for personal and household use above the allowed exemptions, and (2) commercial importations up to the value that can be entered on a baggage declaration or informal entry;
- Seize prohibited, undeclared, and undervalued items and detain designated items for inspection by other Government officials or other clearances;

- Decide if violations with respect to prohibited, undeclared, or undervalued items are due to misinformation, inadvertence, or inexperience, and if customs purposes are served by collecting regular duty without a penalty;
- Conduct personal search of traveler when indication of smuggling of contraband has been detected, and make arrests if warranted;
- Collect and safeguard evidence in cases of smuggling and/or fraud when either a penalty or criminal prosecution may be warranted;
- Release examined baggage or vehicles after ascertaining that all laws and regulations have been complied with and all duties and taxes paid;
- Give instructions or appropriate forms to travelers in cases of (1) articles not accompanying them, (2) commercial shipments in excess of the value that can be entered on a baggage declaration or informal entry, or requires special approval, (3) seizures that may be petitioned for return, or (4) other similar circumstances;
- Determine appropriate entry and bond for temporary importations, and prepare as necessary; determine if descriptive lists include correct description and value of such importations as commercial samples, tools of the trade, etc.; and fix the amount of bonds and penalties to be applied if not delivered for exportation.

### *Cargo Inspection*

"Cargo inspection" as used throughout this standard applies to inspection work in connection with all imported cargo whether entered for consumption, warehouse, export, or transportation in bond, released under an immediate delivery permit, placed in general order, or bonded warehouse. Inspectors carry out a wide range of responsibilities in applying regulations and procedures for entering, examining and releasing a wide variety of merchandise from all parts the world. At many ports inspectors may rotate among various cargo stations. Some stations may be terminals for general cargo from several countries; others may be terminals for one bulk product e. g., crude oil or sugar). Inspectors use sound judgment in performing such duties as:

- Oversee the unloading, (as required, oversee or perform the prescribed weighing, gauging, measuring, and sampling, etc.), and account for the disposition of all unladen cargo, restricting the delivery of merchandise without required permit and releasing merchandise under proper permit;
- Compare invoices, entry permit and the bills of lading listed on carrier's manifests to insure that all required documents are complete and in proper form;
- Identify and detain merchandise subject to inspection of other agencies; perform such examination or notify appropriate officials;

- Forward samples of designated merchandise to be examined and appraised by import specialists or for analysis by the U. S. Customs Laboratory;
- Select samples of each invoice for physical examination, particularly choosing cases that appear unusual for any reason; verify that the merchandise is correctly invoiced for classification and value purposes and is entitled to admission into the commerce of the United States;
- Note discrepancies and additional information needed on invoices for proper classification and value determinations;
- Hold up release of shipments and report findings of contraband, undervalued or undeclared items, and other violations of customs regulations and those of other agencies which customs inspectors are required to enforce, (e. g., marking of country of origin; proper labeling; license or permits for restricted drugs, firearms, or other restricted items);
- Check on sufficiency and type of bond before releasing merchandise for immediate delivery, immediate transportation, or other shipment in bond; delivery by cartmen; entry into warehouse, or other disposition;
- Initiate action to place shipments in a customs warehouse (general order) for which entry has not been made within the allotted time;
- Report action on all merchandise manifested to show findings of overages, shortages, pilferage, damages, etc., for each shipment;
- Inspect unaccompanied baggage for contraband; seize prohibited items; determine free and dutiable items; classify and assess duty and taxes on dutiable merchandise; and
- Insure that cargo remains in customs custody until all requirements for release are met,

### *Informal Entry*

Small commercial shipments (not exceeding a specified value) may be entered by "informal entry" procedures. These procedures provide for less involved classification and value determinations than is required for "formal entry." Informal entry procedures may also be used for noncommercial importations (without limitation of value). Inspectors are authorized to prepare entries (or complete entries on which estimated duties have been paid) under informal entry procedures when they determine that such procedures are appropriate. When they find that commercial shipments exceed the amount that can be entered informally, they advise the importer to make formal entry through other designated offices. Inspectors use sound judgment in performing such duties as:

- Inspect for and seize prohibited and restricted items;
  - Report violations of customs laws and those of other agencies;
  - Review invoices and other documents for required data;
- Examine merchandise to determine or verify accuracy of tariff classification and value;
- Determine free or dutiable status;
- Insure that merchandise for sale is properly invoiced and meets the requirements for admission into commerce;
- Hold merchandise requiring inspection of other agencies; and
- Release free and dutiable shipments, collecting and accounting for duty and taxes.

*Primary Inspection* is an initial form of preliminary screening employed at many Canadian and Mexican border ports which have a heavy volume of motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic much of which is local. Assignments of inspectors to this type of work are usually part of a sequence of assignments which includes other aspects of customs inspection work as well. Inspectors assigned to this type of work must quickly determine if a detailed inspection is required by questioning and observing pedestrians or passengers in vehicles, by noting the license (for those on "lookouts"), interior, tires or other features of vehicles, and by reviewing documents for purchases, permits or other pertinent data. Typically, when inspectors determine that written customs entry documents are required, such as for commercial shipments, temporary importations, or merchandise for which duty and taxes are to be collected, travelers are referred to other inspectors.

When they determine that a more detailed inspection is required to search baggage, vehicles, or persons for suspected smuggling of narcotics or other prohibited item, they may accompany the person or vehicle and assist in or perform the detailed inspection. All travelers' baggage or vehicle may routinely be opened and inspected at some ports or at specified times. At other ports or times a detailed inspection may be performed only at the discretion of the inspector performing the screening. Preliminary screening for customs purposes is often combined with similar preliminary screening for immigration, public health, or agricultural purposes at border stations or passenger terminals. After a period of training, a customs inspector, or an inspector for one of the three other services, may perform preliminary screening for all of the services. This involves making judgments such as whether individuals or importations may be allowed to enter or should be referred to the appropriate service for more detailed examination. Assignments to this kind of screening are usually part of development and full performance level positions. The additional duties and knowledge required to perform these assignments are not, by themselves, of more grade-level value than regular inspection work as described in the foregoing section.



### *Export Inspection*

Inspectors may be assigned various duties for cargo or other shipments that require Government supervision to insure that restricted or prohibited merchandise is not smuggled into or out of the country. Such exports include, for example, importations that are prohibited and consequently must be exported, importations that are withdrawn from bonded warehouses for export on which duty and taxes have not been paid, merchandise that must have licenses or permits for exportation, or importations that are just passing through the United States but destined for other countries. Inspectors make judgments about prohibitions, restrictions, or regulations for merchandise being exported that are similar to judgments made about importations. Inspectors perform such duties as:

- Inspect export shipments and, as required, supervise its lading on carriers;
- Verify quantities and condition for compliance with customs in-bond or other transportation entry requirements;
- Verify existence of permits and licenses required by other Government agencies;
- Check seals and condition of containers; and
- Prevent discharge of cargo laden for export.

### *Boarding Vessels or Aircraft*

Vessels or aircraft must be boarded and given permission to unlade before their cargo, crew, or passengers may be discharged. Inspectors have the responsibility for boarding carriers and granting preliminary entry when they have determined that certain documents are in order (e. g., complete manifest listing cargo in bill of lading order by port of lading and discharge port, passenger and crew list, clearance from last port if appropriate, etc.), and that other necessary documents are current (e. g., quarantine clearance, registration certificate, etc.). Trains, trucks and other vehicles must also present manifests, bills of lading, or invoices, and generally are given oral permission to unlade, discharge passengers, etc. Inspectors must know the specific documents required and procedures for their approval in granting entrance and unlading permission. Inspectors perform such duties as:

- Board vessels or aircraft to review cargo manifests and passenger, crew and stores' lists, and if in order, to make entry of vessel or aircraft;
- Collect and receipt such fees and taxes as are applicable;
- Insure that other agency requirements, e. g., Coast Guard, FAA or Commerce Department, have been met;
- Question master or pilot and act on his declaration as to contraband on board and advise master or pilot on customs entry and discharging procedure; and

- Seal stores, crew purchases, medicinal narcotics; search vessels or aircraft if necessary; and oversee the discharge of cargo.

### *Merchandise Examining*

The Bureau of Customs is required by law to examine merchandise to determine that it is truly and correctly invoiced and admissible into the commerce of the United States. Customs inspectors carry out this examination responsibility for two broad categories of importations, namely: (1) merchandise being imported on a baggage declaration or informal entries for private use, in small commercial shipments, or for temporary purposes, and (2) merchandise being imported in large commercial quantities (cargo) which does not require examination by import specialists. In general, merchandise is designated for examination by import specialists rather than by inspectors when the classification requires a technical knowledge of specific tariff principles and precedents. Typically, each port develops instructions for inspectors to follow in sending samples or reporting specific data to the import specialist teams.

The purpose of these examinations by customs inspectors is:

- (1) To detect contraband, prohibited, and restricted items, and to seize or detain such merchandise;
- (2) To determine or verify the proper tariff classification and value of merchandise acquired abroad; and
- (3) To determine for commercial shipments that various requirements for admission into commerce of the United States are met.

Inspectors examine, classify, assess, and collect duty and taxes on merchandise for personal use with unlimited value and for commercial importations up to the value that can be entered on a baggage declaration or informal entry.

Inspectors do not determine the tariff classification and value of the merchandise for commercial importations that exceed the amount that can be entered informally. However, the knowledge and judgment required in verifying that the information on the invoice is sufficient for classification purposes are the same as those used in classifying importations on an informal entry. Specifically, in both instances inspectors determine that (1) the description of the item on the in-invoice matches what they see and contains the characteristics needed to classify it (insofar as this can be ascertained by a physical examination); and (2) the item appears to be correctly priced. Inspectors also take note of unusual containers which may be designed for use other than transporting the item and may therefore be dutiable.

It should be noted that classification and value determinations made by inspectors for importations on a baggage declaration or informal entry do not set precedents, nor do these determinations require consideration of such technical questions as selling practices, discounts, trade agreements, and potential use. Import specialists consider these and other issues in making classification and value determinations entered by "formal entry." On new items, the final

classification made by the import specialist sets a precedent for subsequent importations of such items at any port.

For commercial shipments the inspector also insures that the invoice meets the minimum requirements for acceptance. The invoice must contain the following factual information: Person to whom sold or shipped; seller's or shipper's name; country of export; a detailed description of the merchandise including trade names, grade or quality, trademarks, numbers or symbols and marks and numbers of packages in which packed; quantities in weights and measures; and unit price in currency of purchase. When all of these data are not given, the inspector informs the importer that the data must be provided before the merchandise can be inspected and released. For importations for personal use the inspector uses the invoice primarily for data about the purchase and its price in determining the dutiable value of merchandise.

In physically examining samples of shipments the inspector verifies that articles fully agree with the invoice description including shipping marks and numbers; that the description of the merchandise is adequate for tariff classification purposes, the importer's classification is apparently correct, and the values given are within reason for the grade and quality of the merchandise. The inspector as examining officer makes a report on the invoice showing date of examination, quantity information, and any other notation concerning the examination of the merchandise. His initials on each invoice certifies that the merchandise has been examined (which is required by law). His report becomes the official record of the importation on which the duties and taxes are determined.

If the inspector judges that the invoice description of the merchandise is inadequate or incorrect, he must have the knowledge of commodity classification determination factors to be able to insert in a few words the *critical* information needed by the import specialist in making the classification and value determination. For example, if an invoice reads only sweaters and the inspector finds that they are wool he would add "wool" (checking also to see that the sweaters are labeled correctly); or if the invoice reads "wool sweaters" and he finds them ornamented, the word "ornamented" would be added.

In checking and reporting on various merchandise, inspectors must become familiar with a wide variety of information in examining manuals and instructions from import specialists. These guidelines identify the variety of features to be checked and the action to be taken by the inspector, in his examination, and focus on the critical points involved in determining the classification value, or release for specific classifications. For example, one of the basic principles is that the "Material of Chief Value" in the merchandise determines the classification and value under the tariff act. To classify importations it is necessary to know how this principle is applied to various categories of merchandise. An item may be listed under the material of which it is made, its use, or its name, etc. When an invoice states gloves, it is necessary also to give the material of which it is made and in some instances how constructed (made), the purpose, size, etc., since gloves could be classified many different ways (I. e., wool, cotton, rubber, or ornamented fabrics; hand sewn, lined, or seamless; boxing, children=s or industrial). On the other hand, many items do not have specific classification, for example, "Wood Articles, Other." The guidelines for examining such merchandise may request the examiner to determine if a more specific classification is in order, such as a commonly imported item that has a higher duty rate.

Additionally, they may need to consider a more specific "Other" such as "Wood Articles; Household Utensils, Other." Even if the duty rate is the same, the accuracy of the commodity classification is important for Department of Commerce statistics on commercial importations. Similarly, examining guidelines identify many other critical factors, such as items that may be prohibited only from certain countries; items under quota; and trademarks.

In addition, the inspector is responsible for insuring that the merchandise is properly marked as to country of origin and that other requirements for admission into commerce of the United States are met such as labeling and licensing. These requirements concern, for example, quota restrictions, foreign asset control regulations, copyright and trademark regulations, provision of the Wool Labeling Act and the Textile Fiber Products Identification Act, and regulations concerning merchandise which might be injurious to the health of the community or to plant and animal life and other similar conditions.. The inspector must be familiar with various lists and manuals that identify products covered by these restrictions and regulations. Inspectors must check certain specific features to as sure compliance with the regulations before releasing the merchandise. For example, automobiles must have a tag or label stating compliance with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards Act and clean air standards; or for products under quota restriction, a check must be made that the quota is not filled or to obtain authorization or animals from certain countries must be prohibited because of danger of introducing various diseases to domestic live stock; or products must not use insignia or be labeled with registered trademarks; e.g., vacuum bottles must not be labeled "Thermos."

## AUTHORIZED TITLES

*Customs Inspector* is the title established for nonsupervisory positions in this series.

*Supervisory Customs Inspector* is the title established for positions in which supervisory duties and responsibilities are significant. The [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#) is used to determine the grade levels of supervisory positions.

## CLASSIFICATION FACTORS

The following factors are used to determine the degree of difficulty and complexity and level of responsibility of nonsupervisory customs inspector positions:

- (1) Nature of assignment.
- (2) Level of responsibility.

These two factors are described for each grade level. Qualification requirements are not described separately but rather are reflected as appropriate in both factors.

### *Nature of assignment*

This factor deals with the nature and purpose of functions performed; the complexity and difficulty of the assignments and problems encountered; the degree of judgment; and the skills and knowledge required.

Inspectors normally perform several of the functions discussed above under "Inspection Functions." Some positions, however, involve work primarily related to baggage operations or cargo operations. It is the difficulty and responsibility of the duties rather than the variety of inspections which determines the grade-level. Essentially the same knowledge and degree of judgment may be required even though the duties are somewhat different. For example, inspectors examine merchandise to classify, appraise and collect duties and taxes (as necessary) in both baggage and informal entry work. Similar knowledge, degree of judgment, and decisions are applied in examining general cargo to verify that the invoice description and price actually matches the merchandise and contains the data required for the classification and value determination.

For merchandise imported as baggage, informal entry, or cargo, the tariff classification determination ranges in difficulty and degree of knowledge required, depending on the complexity of factors that must be considered. For example, trainee inspectors after training in the provisions of the tariff act and how merchandise is classified under the tariff schedule are able to make the few determinations needed to classify such items as books, food products, bulk cargo, repetitive shipment of parts from the same manufacturer, and other easily identified items. Some merchandise involves many determinations requiring specialized knowledge. For example, wearing apparel requires considerable knowledge of selective characteristics of the merchandise itself as well as the basis for fine distinctions among various classifications. This knowledge is gained primarily by extensive experience in reviewing invoices and examining a variety of merchandise and is typical of the full performance level.

There is an element of hazard in some customs inspection work in connection with the apprehension of persons who violate customs laws. The reaction of such persons is unpredictable and the inspector must be alert to threats to himself or to others. The element of hazard in some customs inspection work makes demands on the skills and judgment of the inspector and has been considered in the evaluation factors covering these positions.

### *Level of responsibility*

This factor reflects the degree of supervision received, the nature and complexity of decisions made by inspectors, and the nature of personal contacts.

Inspectors have full authority to release imports. For the most part these decisions are not susceptible of review except by deliberate supervisory action to do so. Decisions to seize smuggled merchandise or hold merchandise for irregularities or violations are typically approved by the supervisor or other official after the fact. Decisions to detain or arrest violators normally are concurred in by the supervisor or higher level inspector.

Inspectors at the entry level work under step-by-step supervision to become familiar with the many forms, procedures, techniques of inspection, and standard practices. Inspectors at the full

working level seek guidance for unusual and sensitive problems. When inspectors release cargo and baggage they are certifying that the shipment meets the legal requirements for importation. When they determine that the legal importation requirements have not been met, inspectors deny release of merchandise.

Inspectors' actions are usually final in (1) examining and releasing baggage or informal entry importations, and (2) in determining dutiable value and amount of duties and taxes payable. However, their determinations as to classification of baggage or informal entry importations may be reviewed on a spot-check basis or at the request of the traveler or importer.

For commercial cargo on formal entry, reports made by inspectors as to examination and quantity of merchandise, condition of packages at the time of arrival, shortages, excesses and other deviations from manifests, entries, invoices or permits are subject to administrative review and form a basis for the final determination of duties and taxes.

Personal contacts are important at all levels, Inspectors must conduct inspections quickly, effectively, and pleasantly with people of all social and cultural levels, both citizen and alien. Particularly in examining merchandise with the traveler or importer present, they must remain calm and businesslike in the face of provocations intended to rattle, intimidate, and distract. Similarly, they must use mature Judgment and discretion when persons express anger and at times more violent behavior during the questioning, inspecting, or searching process. The decision to release or detain merchandise for further inspection is based on skillful questioning and observation of the total situation including the manner and behavior of the people as well as the data elicited. Trainee inspectors are generally assigned to work closely with experienced inspectors in developing this skill and judgment.

### *Knowledge and Skills*

Customs inspectors require a variety of knowledge and skills. While not an exhaustive list, inspectors at the full performance level in inspection work for baggage or cargo operations must have such knowledge and abilities as:

1. A knowledge of the provision of laws, regulations, procedures, practices, and documentation which relate to customs processes for entry, examination, inspection, control, and release of imports and exports.
2. Familiarity with the provisions of laws and regulations of other agencies with respect to prohibited and restricted items and requirements for admittance into the country and into commerce and admission of persons into the United States.
3. Overall knowledge of the tariff schedules of the United States and a good understanding of the basic principles, factors and terms used in the determination of the tariff classification and value.
4. Knowledge of a wide variety and kind of merchandise and a general familiarity with their characteristics for tariff classification purposes, such as grade, quality, construction, condition, and use.

5. Knowledge of the requirements, documents and authorities for entering vessels, aircraft, and other carriers and granting permit to unlade.
6. Ability to make accurate judgments and prompt decisions so that transportation services or persons will not be delayed unduly.
7. Ability to deal tactfully with and gain the cooperation of travelers, importers, and others such as employees of importers, shipping companies, other agencies, and terminals.
8. Ability to observe and identify unusual conditions of merchandise, behavior, or documents indicating possible violations of laws and regulations.
9. Ability to make written and oral reports and correctly annotate and complete a variety of customs forms.

## **NOTES TO USERS**

The two-grade interval pattern depicted in this standard reflects a work assignment pattern in which inspectors are trained, prepared, and advanced to carry out the variety of nonsupervisory duties and responsibilities in the customs inspection and control program. However, there are work situations in which management practices, organization patterns, the seasonal nature of the work, or other factors result in a different pattern of assignments. Such situations must be analyzed carefully to determine the effect of such differences on the grade level of the positions concerned. For example, in work situations where inspectors do not exercise the full and independent responsibility for carrying out inspection assignments, or where the assignments involve less than full inspection as described for baggage or cargo, these differences must be taken into account in determining the proper grade levels of individual positions. In such work situations, the use of grade GS-8 may be appropriate.

The occasional performance of higher grade level duties should not be used as the basis for classifying positions to the higher grade level. For customs inspector positions the higher grade level duties and responsibilities must occupy at least a majority of the employee's regular working time in accordance with the principle governing the classification of mixed-grade positions.

## **OPM BENCHMARKS**

### **CUSTOMS INSPECTOR GS-1890-05**

#### *Nature of assignment*

GS-5 customs inspectors receive training in the objectives, procedures, and practices of inspecting baggage, cargo, and carriers (vehicles, vessels, trains, and aircraft), entering or leaving the United States at designated ports of entry or stations. They are instructed in the provisions of the tariff act and other laws, regulations, manuals and procedures governing the importation and exportation of merchandise (personal or commercial).

GS-5 customs inspectors receive a combination of on-the-job training and organized instruction in the rudimentary aspects of entry processes, inspection requirements, tariff classifications, rates of duty, and custody and control procedures as they relate to their specific assignments.

In baggage and vehicle inspection work, GS-5 inspectors receive training in such areas as how to deal effectively with various types of travelers, how to recognize when a detailed inspection should be done and how to conduct baggage, vehicle and personal searches. As training progresses, GS-5 customs inspectors are assigned to an operating line or station under the close observation of an experienced inspector or supervisor, or they inspect baggage and packages of passengers and pedestrians who typically have been prescreened and designated for a routine inspection.

In cargo inspection work, GS-5 customs inspectors receive training in the procedures and documents involved in the various inspection and control processes for different types of entries and cargo. As training progresses, GS- 5 customs inspectors perform selected tasks in different phases of the inspection process such as unloading, verifying, or releasing cargo under the close observation of an experienced inspector.

GS-5 customs inspectors may perform tasks also performed by customs aids. However, such assignments are geared to giving the inspector a knowledge of all aspects of the inspection process.

#### *Level of responsibility*

GS-5 customs inspectors work under the detailed step-by-step supervision of experienced customs inspectors. Initially, they work alongside an experienced inspector performing specific tasks and observing methods and techniques. They carry out the inspection tasks to which they are assigned under the close observation of an experienced inspector who reviews their actions and corrects errors on the spot. Notations on and approval of documents are reviewed for accuracy, completeness and conformance with instructions.



## **CUSTOMS INSPECTOR GS-1890-07**

### *Nature of assignment*

Inspector positions at both the GS-5 and GS-7 levels are developmental. They differ in that GS-7 customs inspectors have responsibility for carrying out a sequence of steps involved in applying various prescribed procedures. In comparison, GS- 5 customs inspectors carry out assigned tasks in inspection work under close observation.

In addition to the training described at the GS-5 level, GS-7 customs inspectors receive advanced training in skills and techniques for:

- Detecting evidence of contraband, smuggling, and fraud;
- Identifying free and dutiable articles under the tariff schedule; and
- Applying appropriate specialized procedures for a variety of inspection, enforcement and control functions.

GS-7 customs inspectors carry out different phases of inspections work. As their training progresses, assignments are selected to provide experience in the full range of inspection duties typical of the port to which assigned.

GS-7 customs inspectors in operational assignments independently carry out duties in which judgment is limited primarily to applying prescribed procedures, involving few decisions and determinations, such as:

- Questioning and observing travelers to ascertain the need to fill out baggage declaration; and examining and passing baggage that is free of duty and importations within allowed exemptions;
- Examining baggage and cargo for prohibited and restricted items and undeclared and undervalued merchandise;
- Checking and reviewing all documents, and sealing containers and shipments for immediate transportation under bond;
- Authorizing and observing unloading, weighing, sampling, etc., of bulk cargo to insure accuracy of procedures and validity of data;
- Checking various shipping documents and verifying quantity, condition, and identity of merchandise on each invoice.

*Level of responsibility*

GS-7 customs inspectors are given specific instructions about the procedures, forms and action required with each new or complicated assignment. They carry out independently, recurring assignments involving standard operating practices to check or verify specific facts. The supervisor or a customs inspector of higher grade provides advice and assistance when difficulties arise. GS-7 customs inspectors report violations and findings indicative of irregularities and questionable data before proceeding further.

GS-7 customs inspectors have the authority to (a) detain imports that are prohibited, restricted, or require approval or inspection of other agencies, (b) detain persons and imports for searching or further checking when discrepancies arise or behavior is suspicious, and (c) refuse permission to unlade, move, or release cargo unless proper documents are in order or specific procedures such as sampling or gauging are being carried out as specified. GS-7 customs inspectors immediately report their findings in such instances to the supervisor or customs inspector of higher grade for approval and advice.

As training progresses, GS-7 customs inspectors apply a more detailed knowledge of processes, requirements, and procedures outlined in the inspector's manual and local instructions for the usual functions involved in the duties to which assigned. Their decisions that customs requirements have been met in repetitive assignments are generally accepted. However, spot checks are made to assure that their actions are accurate and properly performed.

## **CUSTOMS INSPECTOR GS-1890-09**

GS-9 customs inspectors perform the full range of inspection, enforcement and merchandise examination functions in baggage or cargo operations or both. They differ from GS-7 inspectors in that they independently determine and take whatever action is required for most types of difficulties and problems encountered in baggage and cargo inspections. In comparison, GS-7 inspectors work under the direction and guidance of an experienced inspector or supervisor when they, as a part of their development, perform the more difficult inspection work in enforcement and examining merchandise.

*Nature of assignment*

GS-9 inspectors independently examine and release a wide variety of merchandise from many sources or countries. This merchandise is received as baggage, cargo, or informal entries. GS-9 inspectors perform the full range of any combination thereof including examining merchandise and inspection work for baggage, cargo, or informal entry, or associated functions such as boarding vessels and aircraft and inspecting exports. They carry out complete inspections involving a wide variety of conditions and complexities with responsibility for exploring issues and taking final action. These issues may involve various problems such as uncooperative people, missing shipments or documents, improper entries, attempted smuggling and fraud, or inadequate description of or unusual merchandise. Inspectors use seasoned judgment in:

- Interpreting and applying numerous procedures and requirements for entering, examining, classifying and releasing merchandise;
- Recognizing and evaluating conditions and circumstances that may provide evidence of smuggling, fraud, and other violations;
- Establishing facts and securing evidence that is needed for assessing penalties, prosecution, or further investigation; and
- Examining merchandise to determine and provide specific factors and conditions for each item that are important for tariff classification and value determinations.

The following assignments are illustrative:

1. GS-9 inspectors perform baggage inspection duties at ports with a substantial volume of traffic and travelers of all types. Inspectors quickly evaluate a wide array of information and observations, e. g., citizenship, behavior, and appearance of people; where traveled, destination, and purpose; type of importations; required documents; presence of animals; kind of baggage; inconsistencies, etc. They use judgment based on experience to determine the degree of interrogation, searching, and examination required. This volume and variety of conditions present many problems with respect to (a) detecting evidence of smuggling narcotics, other contraband, undeclared and undervalued merchandise; (b) classifying and appraising widely varying merchandise; and (c) preparing or processing entries for temporary, restricted, or other special importations. GS-9 inspectors make final judgments and decisions based on their composite knowledge of (a) overall clearance processes; (b) regulations, procedures, and practices with respect to free and dutiable merchandise; and (c) techniques used by persons or firms to smuggle or defraud. They have authority to:
  - Examine and pass without limitation as to value, all articles in such baggage or otherwise accompanying such persons which are personal or household effects and are free of duty;
  - Examine, classify, and determine the dutiable value of and pass admissible articles accompanying the arriving person which are for his personal or household use but are subject to duty, including articles imported by a nonresident;
  - Examine, classify, and determine the dutiable value and pass merchandise properly listed on the baggage declaration which are not personal or household effects of the traveler, up to the value that can be entered on a baggage declaration;
  - Examine and verify the description and value of various temporary importations such as commercial samples, professional tools, vehicles for racing events, etc.; and determine amount of bond and penalty to be applied for failure to submit items for exportation;

- Seize contraband such as marijuana, heroin, various restricted drugs and other articles being smuggled; take violator into custody; perform personal search as appropriate; and detain violator for interrogation and arrest by agents; and
  - Detain undeclared or undervalued items of merchandise; classify and determine domestic cost of items; determine penalty, duty, and taxes; evaluate the nature of and circumstances surrounding the violation and recommend mitigation of penalty when warranted.
2. GS-9 inspectors perform the full customs functions for informal entries for a wide variety of merchandise. This work may be carried out by inspectors in baggage inspection or cargo inspection. Inspectors consider many factors and conditions in determining if merchandise can be imported by an informal entry rather than a formal entry. If merchandise may not be entered informally, they advise travelers and importers about other procedures that may be necessary. They make final determinations and judgments for a wide variety of merchandise in carrying out such duties as:
- examine, classify and determine the dutiable value of the merchandise;
  - complete the necessary documents; and
  - collect and account for the duties and taxes for dutiable merchandise.
3. GS-9 inspectors perform the full range of inspection duties for the importation of cargo that involves substantial volume and variety of commercial importations from numerous sources or countries. This volume and variety present problems that require judgment and knowledge concerning the (a) overall clearance processes, (b) regulations, procedures and practices for different kinds of imports, and (c) techniques used to smuggle or defraud. Inspectors use judgment based on experience to determine the degree of examination of merchandise or supervision of discharging and other operations of carriers required. They make final decisions in releasing shipments and in reporting on the disposition, quantity and condition of shipments discharged. They make essentially final judgments that merchandise is properly described and marked and appears to be correctly priced for cargo released under immediate delivery procedures. GS-9 inspectors have authority to:
- select representative samples of each invoice of merchandise that is authorized to be examined by inspectors;
  - Verify that the description on the invoice matches the item physically examined; determine on the basis of experienced judgment if the description is adequate for classification purposes and the price is reasonable; and if not describe the merchandise and report findings or send sample to import specialist when in doubt;
  - Determine that all requirements have been met for release of shipments under various procedures such as immediate delivery, delivery to warehouses of various types, etc. They insure that the shipment is fully accounted for and that data for collection of duty

and taxes are provided. Inspectors determine if information and documentation is in order, such as proper release from carrier; identification of consignee and delivery agent; identify, quantify and condition of merchandise (overages, shortages, damages, etc.) as verified; sufficiency of bond to cover duty and taxes; etc. They retain customs custody when such documentation is missing;

- Examine, classify, and collect duties and taxes as appropriate for imported merchandise of crew members and that arriving as unaccompanied baggage of travelers;
- Seize prohibited merchandise and contraband such as marijuana or narcotics, in cargo or in crew and unaccompanied baggage; take violator into custody if present; perform personal search; and detain violators for interrogation and arrest by agents;
- Detain undeclared or undervalued items in cargo or baggage; report findings of seizures in cargo; and evaluate the nature of the violation when seized in baggage and take action as described for baggage inspection.

#### *Level of responsibility*

GS-9 inspectors work under the general supervision of a supervisory inspector who assigns them to duty posts. GS-9 inspectors have complete independence for carrying out all types of inspection processes in the admission and release of baggage, cargo, and informal entries. GS-9 inspectors are primarily assigned to activities or stations that are remote from or for which it is impractical to provide supervision. In comparison, GS-7 inspectors are given instructions with new or complicated assignments and the supervisor or experienced inspector gives advice when difficulties arise.

GS-9 inspectors are free to make on-the-spot decisions in planning work, following leads and developing evidence of fraud, smuggling, and violation of other laws. They determine the kind and extent of useful information to be obtained by (1) thorough interrogation of travelers, importers, or carrier staff; and (2) intensive inspection, examination or search of documents, merchandise, containers, carriers, etc. In comparison, a supervisor or experienced inspector provides guidance to GS-7 inspectors when they encounter suspicious conditions.

GS-9 inspectors normally report their reasons to the supervisor or higher level inspector before making personal searches. However, they have the authority to conduct searches of suspected smugglers without supervisory concurrence if necessary in their judgment to preserve evidence.

GS-9 inspectors consult with the supervisor, higher level inspector, or at times with others, such as import specialists to report unusual conditions or to obtain guidance on what to check and consider in examining merchandise for such situations as new kinds of items or very similar items that could be given different tariff classifications.

They are responsible for recognizing conditions that may indicate a pattern of smuggling, fraud or other criminal operation for investigation by agents or import specialists. In reporting seizures of contraband, undervaluation of merchandise, and for other violations, other than for serious

violations, GS-9 inspectors are responsible for indicating if a penalty should be assessed or mitigated based on their evaluation of the facts, intent, and possible extenuating circumstances.

Actions and decisions of GS-9 inspectors in the admission and release of goods are largely unreviewed except as actions are protested or documents are further processed. They keep the supervisor or higher level inspector informed about problems that may delay or impede the work and matters that may result in further controversy, prosecution, and attention at higher levels.

## **CUSTOMS INSPECTOR GS-1890-11**

GS-11 customs inspectors perform a wide range of advisory, coordinating, and special investigating duties involving complex and highly sensitive inspection and control issues. These issues require expertise in a broad range of inspection, enforcement, special interrogation and inquiry, and merchandise examining functions. GS-11 inspectors typically are responsible for (1) overseeing the inspection and control operations as performed by GS-9 inspectors for various stations processing extensive volumes and varieties of international cargo or passenger traffic involving a combination of such circumstances as diverse and complex transactions, special and unique conditions, and high risk of smuggling, fraud, and hostile incidents; (2) planning and carrying out assignments, projects, or studies to explore and resolve major problems as indicated in the illustrative examples below; and/or (3) performing assignments as a senior technician and advisor which are distinct from and which clearly exceed those described at GS-9 and that are fully equivalent in difficulty, responsibility, and qualifications required to the illustrative examples below.

By comparison, GS-9 inspectors perform inspection, enforcement, and merchandise examination functions involved in the admission and release of baggage and cargo being imported into or exported from the United States, ranging from routine to complex transactions.

### *Nature of assignment*

GS-11 inspectors responsible for overseeing inspection and control operations for cargo or baggage, or both, perform a broad range of administrative, advisory and coordinating duties and responsibilities. They assess the on-going activities in the stations assigned as indicated above to insure that the work is carried out in a timely, expeditious, and appropriate manner. They plan and coordinate actions with other functional areas (e.g., classification and value, investigations) in applying intelligence information, resolving mutual problems, interpreting requirements, etc. They advise other customs inspectors, travelers, agents of commerce, etc., of procedures and requirements in unusual and controversial situations. They approve the inspection and control action to be taken involving sensitive and unique conditions. They initiate remedial action to correct deficiencies. They advise and guide lower graded inspectors in applying a wide variety of procedures, methods, and policies to widely diversified inspection and control activities. GS-11 inspectors plan and carry out assignments, projects, studies, or investigations to explore and resolve major problems in improving operations and enforcement activities, installing new procedures, establishing evidence of irregular and fraudulent practices, and planning and participating in cooperative arrangement with other countries. These assignments may be part of

broad programs such as advice to and consultation with foreign countries on overseas enforcement for narcotics. In such instances, GS-11 inspectors perform specific projects such as evaluating inspection operations; developing improvements in processes, use of personnel, facilities, etc.; or providing training in methods and techniques to enhance the effectiveness of inspectors. Other assignments may be as a part of a team effort with import specialists and agents to establish proof of fraud against a particular importer based on leads, tip-offs, or suspicious tactics.

## Illustrations

GS-11 inspectors perform one or more assignments of the nature and scope as described below:

1. In the capacity of senior worker, aids supervisor by overseeing inspection and control activities for one or more cargo stations. GS-11 inspectors are responsible for maintaining liaison with key staff and terminal operators, carriers, shippers, and importers to obtain resolution of problems causing delays, bottlenecks, excessive work to clear shipments, etc.; they guide and instruct a group of inspectors in the procedures, methods, and policies for carrying out inspection in complex, unusual, or highly sensitive situations such as boarding or entering vessels when complex transactions involve advance enforcement information, or the presence of liens, or other unresolved technical/ legal matters; they guide other inspectors or personally follow up and initiate necessary corrective and/or punitive actions when shipments are improperly discharged, requirements for entry or inspection are unmet, or other irregularities are noted. For example, when cargo has been misdelivered or released from customs custody without permission, GS-11 inspectors contact the carrier's representative to advise him of the penalties that will be incurred if the shipment is not returned intact. They advise the dispatcher of the firm who picked up the merchandise of impending punitive action for improper removal from customs custody. Finally, they notify the importer that his merchandise will be subject to seizure if it is not redelivered to customs intact. GS-11 inspectors directly advise terminal operators of action necessary to correct or improve security. They evaluate and prepare reports and make recommendations to higher levels of physical and procedural security matters at their stations. They instruct inspectors GS-9 and advise commercial interests on all aspects of the control programs and procedures to prevent theft and heighten cargo security from the time of entry to delivery to importers. GS-11 inspectors guide GS-9 inspectors in developing information concerning cargo losses or apparent thefts and on all other matters that may require formal investigation, detention, or arrest of violators.
2. In the capacity of senior worker, aids supervisor by overseeing inspection and control activities for baggage operations. GS-11 inspectors are responsible for guiding and instructing a group of inspectors in the procedures, methods, and policies for carrying out inspections in complex, unusual, and highly sensitive situations, such as in the conduct of personal search or persons requiring special handling. They determine if personal search is necessary and approve conduct of and extent of such search. GS-11 inspectors ascertain that seizures, detention, and penalty actions are correctly accomplished by other inspectors and adequate for possible criminal prosecution. They provide guidance to other inspectors regarding sensitive interrogations, inquiries, and the basis for detaining, apprehending and

arresting violators to properly conclude such actions. They determine whether or not violations are "petty" or "serious" and as appropriate, remit or mitigate fines and penalties based on data developed by lower graded inspectors or their own assessment of the circumstances. GS-11 inspectors take various actions to keep lines moving, such as redirecting flow when other inspectors are tied up for long periods of time with voluminous curios, informal entries, or uncooperative persons. In situations where difficult or hostile personal relations develop, they explain procedures and requirements to travelers and reinforce correctness-of-action being taken by inspectors. GS-11 inspectors have responsibility for resolving on-the-spot protests of actions taken by GS-9 inspectors in assessing duty and taxes, determining allowances, applying special provisions, etc. They advise on and follow up on issues needing answers as posed by inspectors or the public.

3. Serve as a specialist in inspection and control functions on a tactical team along with an import specialist and agent investigating suspected fraudulent importations. Based on their assessment of the nature of the fraud, GS-11 inspectors develop the approach and tactics to be used for integration of inspection and control aspects into the overall plan of attack. Typically, inspectors carry out the inspection portion and assist in other areas of such investigation. They are expected to recognize and develop the kind of evidence that will substantiate criminal prosecution or other action to be taken.
4. Serve as team leader for conducting audits and exploratory investigations of import/export records and other data in the field to establish trends and patterns that indicate possible irregular or illegal practices that result in evasion of duty and taxes. For example, GS- 11 inspectors may review an air carrier's clearances to determine proper use of bonded fuel withdrawals. GS-11 inspectors initiate studies to expose the methods used, frequency of such practices, businesses involved, etc. They develop reports of findings, suggestions, and procedures that can be used to curtail such practices and prevent further abuse.
5. Plan and carry out a variety of troubleshooting assignments involving delicate relationships and critical issues. For example, GS-11 inspectors make spot investigations of as office records to determine that records and documents substantiate claims about nonimportation of merchandise. In the absence of bona fide documents verifying the claim, inspectors audit various shipping and other documents and question representatives of the firm to develop evidence to account for the missing shipments, to identify the nature of unsubstantiated claims and to establish a case for penalty action, revocation of unloading permits, etc.
6. Serve as a member of a team detailed to foreign countries to advise and plan for agreements with foreign governments about various activities involving the clearance of cargo, passengers, or other articles for importation into the United States. GS-11 inspectors perform a variety of assignments such as evaluating inspection and control operations being carried out overseas in order to recommend improvements, revise operations and methodology, develop material for and train persons in inspection and control processes and techniques, or incorporate use of an intelligence base in inspection and control operations.

*Level of responsibility*



GS-11 inspectors operate with a high degree of independence in identifying problems to be resolved that impede operations in the assigned areas of responsibility. They receive special assignments as stated problem or an area for investigation and analysis for which objectives are indicated in general terms GS-11 inspectors organize the approach and determine the extent of fact finding and analysis required. They apply an extensive knowledge of inspection and control programs, policies, and processes including the application of intelligence information, entry requirements, and overall tariff considerations in identifying the issues and developing solutions to problems or fully substantiating evidence for penalty actions or prosecution. They adapt techniques and methods to the particular problems involved, and carry follow up actions and projects through to completion.

In working as team members on broad problems or cases involving other functional areas of Customs (e.g., classification and value and criminal investigation) GS-11 inspectors are responsible for planning and integrating the inspection and control aspects into the overall study or investigation. In comparison, GS-9 inspectors participate in phases of investigation or study under the leadership of a higher level inspector.

GS-11 inspectors carry out assignments that require negotiation on important questions of compliance, enforcement, and operating practices with highly knowledgeable staff members of terminal operators, importing firms, transportation companies and others in the importing and exporting business. Similarly, they must use a high degree of skill in a wide range of contacts to elicit information, unearth irregular practices, and identify operational problems.

Judgments and decisions of inspectors at this level typically are accepted as completed staff action. The inspectors' recommendations on changes in procedures and practices are reviewed for effect on other operations and administrative and policy considerations such as time, staff, and costs.