Trusted Trader Program Pilot Announcement Expected Soon

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U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske indicated recently that a *Federal Register* notice soliciting volunteers to help pilot test an integrated Trusted Trader program should be published in the near future. CBP has delayed the launch of this pilot, which was initially planned for last fall, amid efforts to make the Food and Drug Administration and the Consumer Product Safety Commission part of it.

The Trusted Trader program seeks to expand the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, an initiative launched in 2001 to ensure the safety of imported goods, into a broader authorized economic operator-type program by unifying it with the Importer Self-Assessment program, which focuses on compliance with traditional customs issues such as classification, valuation, etc. CBP intends this change to be a step toward its long-term goal of a holistic, integrated trusted trader program across U.S. government agencies and believes it will also create an opportunity to enhance existing and future mutual recognition arrangements with foreign trading partners.

The Trusted Trader pilot is expected to have three phases, the first of which will combine C-TPAT and ISA application, review, validations and vetting. A senior CBP official recently said the agency is looking to run the first phase with three to four companies for 18 months. While this official indicated that ISA could eventually be discontinued in favor of the Trusted Trader program, other officials have emphasized that the Trusted Trader program would have no effect on C-TPAT or its benefits.

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