this section which is required to be published in the Federal Register, that person is not required in any manner to resort to, or be adversely affected by, that matter if it is not published or incorporated by reference. That is, any matter which imposes an obligation and which is not published or incorporated by reference can not adversely change or affect a person's rights.

§ 103.4 Public inspection and copying.

(a) In general. Subject to the application of the exemption described in §103.12 the United States Customs Service is required, by 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(2) and §§174.32 and 177.10 of this chapter, to make available for public inspection and copying or, in the alternative, promptly publish and offer for sale, the following information:

(1) Final opinions and orders, including concurring or dissenting opinions, made in the adjudication of cases;

(2) Within 120 days of issuance, any precedential decision (including any ruling letter, internal advice memorandum, or protest review decision) issued under the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended, with respect to any Customs transaction;

(3) Those statements of policy and interpretations which have been adopted by the United States Customs Service but are not published in the Federal Register; and

(4) Administrative staff manuals and instructions to staff that affect a member of the public.

(b) Indexes. The United States Customs Service is required by 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(2) to maintain and make available for public inspection and copying those current indexes which identify any item described in paragraphs (a)(1) through (3) of this section that is issued, adopted, or promulgated after July 4, 1967, and that is required to be made available for public inspection or published. Unless the Commissioner determines by an order published in the Federal Register that publication is unnecessary and impracticable, these indexes are published on a quarterly or more frequent basis and are available for purchase at each of the public reading rooms listed in §103.1, at a cost not to exceed the direct cost of duplication.

(c) Effect of failure to publish or make available. No matter, described in paragraphs (a)(1) through (3) of this section which is required by this section to be made available for public inspection or published, may be relied upon, used, or cited as precedent by the United States Customs Service against a party, other than an agency, unless that party has actual and timely notice of such matter or unless the matter has been indexed and either made available for inspection or published, as provided by this section. This paragraph applies only to matters which have precedential significance and does not apply to matters which have been made available pursuant to §103.3.

(d) Deletion of identifying details. To prevent an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(2), identifying details contained in any matter described in paragraphs (a)(1) through (3) of this section are deleted before making that matter available for inspection or publication. However, in every case where identifying details are deleted, the basis for the deletion is explained in writing, giving specific reasons for the deletion and citing the applicable provision of 5 U.S.C. 552 and §103.12, in an attachment to the document from which the identifying details have been deleted.

(e) Public reading rooms. The United States Customs Service has available for inspection and copying, in a reading room or otherwise, the matters described in paragraphs (a)(1) through (3) of this section which are required by paragraph (a) to be made available for public inspection or published in the current indexes. Facilities are provided whereby a person may inspect and obtain copies of the material. There is no fee for access to materials, but a fee is charged in accordance with §103.10 for a copy of any material provided.

§ 103.5 Specific requests for records.

(a) In general. Except with respect to the records made available under §§103.3 and 103.4, but subject to the application of the exemptions described in §103.12, the United States Customs Service is required, by 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(3), upon a request for reasonably-
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described records that conforms in every respect to the rules and procedures of this part, to make the requested records promptly available to the requester. A request or an appeal from the initial denial of a request which does not comply with the requirements set forth in this part is not subject to the time limits of §§103.6, 103.7, and 103.8 until amended so as to comply. Nevertheless, every reasonable effort will be made to answer each request within the applicable time limits or, if necessary, to promptly advise the requester in what respect the request or appeal is deficient so that it may be resubmitted or amended for consideration in accordance with this part. This section applies only to existing records which are in the possession or control of the United States Customs Service. There is no requirement that records be created or data be processed in other than the existing format in order to answer a request for records.

(b) Requests for records not in control of the United States Customs Service—(1) Referral of request. Where the request is for a record in the possession of, under the control of, or created by a constituent unit of the Department of the Treasury other than the United States Customs Service, the appropriate Customs officer shall transfer the request to the appropriate constituent unit and notify the requester of that transfer. Forwarding a request to another constituent unit is not a denial of access within the meaning of these regulations. If the United States Customs Service receives a request forwarded from another constituent unit of the Department of the Treasury, the time limits for response set forth in §§103.6(b) and 103.8(a) commence upon receipt of the request by the Disclosure Law Officer, U.S. Customs Service. If the United States Customs Service receives a request for a record that is not in the possession or control of any constituent unit of the Department of the Treasury, the appropriate Customs officer shall return the request to the sender with an explanation of that fact.

(2) Request for advice. If the Customs Service has a copy of a requested unclassified record that was created by a Department or agency other than a constituent unit of the Department of the Treasury, the appropriate Customs officer shall ask that Department or agency for its advice on the release of the record. The appropriate Customs officer shall advise the other Department or agency that, in the absence of timely guidance from it, the United States Customs Service will proceed to make its own determination in accordance with this part. If it becomes necessary to respond to a requester because of the time limits set forth in §§103.6(b) and 103.8(a) without the advice of the other Department or agency, the appropriate Customs officer shall make the determination in accordance with this part and advise the requester accordingly. If the appropriate Customs officer denies access to the record under one of the exemptions set forth in §103.12, that officer shall advise the requester of the right to appeal the denial and of the possibility of sending a request for the record directly to the originating Department or agency. If a requester appeals from a denial to the United States Customs Service, the appropriate Customs officer shall ask the originating Department or agency for timely advice on whether to release the records. Nevertheless, the ultimate decision on the appeal from a denial of access to a record rests with the FOIA Appeals Officer, as set forth in §103.7.

(3) Classified records. If the Customs Service has a copy of a requested record created by a Department or agency other than a constituent unit of the Department of the Treasury, and that record is classified or contains both classified and unclassified material, the request shall be referred to the originating Department or agency for a direct response. The requester shall be notified immediately of the referral. Such referral shall not constitute a denial of the request and no appeal rights accrue to the requester.

(c) Form of request. Although no standard form is prescribed for a request, in order to be subject to the provisions of this section and §§103.6 through 103.9, a request for records must:

(1) Be made in writing and signed by the person making that request;
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(2) State that it is made pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. 552), or these regulations, and have conspicuously printed on the face of the envelope the words “Freedom of Information Act Request” or “FOIA Request”;

(3) Be addressed to the appropriate office or officer of the United States Customs Service, as set forth in paragraph (d) of this section;

(4) Reasonably describe the records in accordance with paragraph (e) of this section;

(5) Set forth the address where the person making the request desires to be notified of the determination as to whether the request will be granted;

(6) State whether the requester wishes to inspect the records or desires to have a copy made and furnished without first inspecting them; and

(7) State the firm agreement of the requester to pay the fees for search and duplication ultimately determined in accordance with § 103.10, or request that such fees be reduced or waived and state the justification for such request (see § 103.10(d)).

Where the initial request, rather than stating a firm agreement to pay the fees ultimately determined in accordance with § 103.10, places an upper limit on the amount the requester agrees to pay and that upper limit is likely to be lower than the estimated fee, or where the requester asks for an estimate of the fees to be charged, or if the fees are expected to exceed $50, the appropriate Customs officer shall promptly advise the requester of the estimated fee due and ask the requester to agree to pay that amount. Where the initial request includes a request for reduction or waiver of fees, the appropriate Customs officer shall determine whether to grant the request for reduction or waiver in accordance with § 103.10(d) and notify the requester of the decision. If the officer decides to charge the requester for all or part of the fees normally due, the officer shall ask the requester to agree to pay the amount so determined. The requirements of this paragraph are not met until the requester agrees, in writing, to pay the fees applicable to the request for records, if any, or has made payment in advance of the fees estimated to be due.

(d) To whom requests for records should be addressed—

(1) Headquarters. Requests made by mail for records maintained at the Headquarters of the United States Customs Service should be addressed to “Freedom of Information Act Request,” U.S. Customs Service, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20229. Requests may be delivered personally to the Disclosure Law Officer, U.S. Customs Service, Headquarters, Washington, DC.

(2) Field offices. A person shall request records or information maintained in a field office of the United States Customs Service by either mailing or personally delivering the request to the director of the service port, or if the records concern the Office of Investigations, the special agent in charge, where the field office is located.

(e) Reasonable description of records. A request for records must describe the records in reasonably sufficient detail to enable a Customs officer who is familiar with the subject area of the request to locate the records without placing an unreasonably burden upon the United States Customs Service. While no specific formula for a reasonable description of a record can be established, the requirement is usually satisfied if the requester gives the name, subject matter, and, if known, the date and location of the requested record. However, a requester should furnish any additional information which will more clearly identify the requested records. If a request does not reasonably describe the records being sought, the appropriate Customs officer shall ask the requester to refine the request. If necessary a requester may be granted a conference with knowledgeable Customs personnel. The requirement for a reasonably description is not a device for improperly withholding records from the public.

(f) Date of receipt of request. A request for records is considered to have been received for purposes of this part on the later of the dates on which:

(1) The requirements of paragraph (c) of this section have been satisfied; and, where applicable,

(2) The requester has agreed in writing, by executing a separate contract
or otherwise, to pay the fees for search
and duplication determined to be due
in accordance with § 103.10; or
(3) The fees have been waived in ac-
cordance with § 103.10(d); or
(4) Payment in advance has been re-
ceived from the requester.
A Customs officer or employee who re-
ceives a request for records and a sepa-
rate agreement to pay, or a letter
transmitting prepayment, or who
issues a final notification of waiver of
fees, shall stamp the date of receipt or
dispatch by the responsible office on
the material. The latest of those dates
is the date of receipt of the request. As
soon as the date of receipt has been es-
tablished, the appropriate Customs of-
icer shall acknowledge receipt and in-
form the requester of the title of the
Customs officer who is responsible for
acting on the request.

(g) Search for record requested. Upon
the receipt of a request, the appro-
priate Customs officer shall attempt to
identify and locate the requested
records. With respect to records main-
tained in computerized form, a search
for a record includes services function-
ally analogous to searches for records
which are maintained in a conven-
tional form. However, Customs per-
sonnel are not required to tabulate or
compile information for the purpose of
creating a record. Only records in ex-
istence at the time of the receipt of the
request will be treated as falling within
the scope of the request and no request
for the continuing production of docu-
ments created after receipt of the re-
quest will be honored.

(h) “Request for record” defined. For
purposes of uniformity in record-
keeping a “request for a record” is de-
fining as a written request for a record
of the U.S. Customs Service which has
not been published in the FEDERAL
REGISTER, the Customs Bulletin, by
press release, or otherwise, or made
available in a public reading room, or
which has not previously been custom-
arily furnished to requesters, whether
or not the request makes reference to
the Freedom of Information Act, as

35084, July 7, 1981, as amended by T.D. 91–77,
13675, Mar. 22, 1999]