

Electronic customs data Frequently asked questions for customers

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Electronic customs data requirement

As part of our ongoing communications since August 2017, Royal Mail requires you to provide customs data electronically when sending items (excluding items of correspondence) to destinations that are not in the same customs union as the UK. **This requirement came into force on 1 January 2019** and is reflected in our user guides. This customs data is the information required for [Customs declaration forms CN22](#) and [CN23](#).

Please check you are fully compliant now, to ensure you benefit from the continuity of a smooth process for sending international postal items when regulations will be more tightly controlled from 1 January 2021.

Please contact your Royal Mail Account Manager if you need further support with providing electronic customs data. Or, if you don't have a dedicated Account Manager, please [click here](#) for further assistance.

We can then work through the options to get you on board with these changes. If your query relates to shipping platform specifications, please contact shippingsupport@royalmail.com.

Why are we asking you to provide electronic customs data?

Electronic customs data is required to ensure that existing, emerging and future legislative, security and customs requirements in overseas destinations are met. Some countries are applying penalties, delaying or returning items in the absence of the required data and we want to help you avoid this. More information on international customs data requirements, such as legislation passed by the United States Government to mandate electronic customs data, as well as details about requirements in other destinations, can be found [here](#).

What are the benefits?

There are also real commercial benefits to providing complete and accurate electronic customs data, as we've seen that customers are receiving fewer complaints and less delays in customs, resulting in faster and more successful deliveries. Providing complete and accurate electronic customs data will

- allow you to be ready for and comply with emerging and future legislative changes and individual country requirements
- avoid delays and/or penalty charges
- enable an easier and slicker customs clearance and import process for recipients as we have seen that customers are receiving fewer complaints, less delays in customs, resulting in faster and more successful deliveries as a result

Providing electronic data will also be important when the UK leaves the EU customs union under Brexit changes. We will be communicating soon on our Brexit preparations to ensure our networks keep flowing freely post Brexit.

Furthermore, the deadline for implementation of the European Union Customs Code is at the end of 2020, which includes legislation requiring electronic customs data to be submitted.

FAQs

What is electronic customs data and what data needs to be provided?

The requirement is to provide electronic Customs data via your shipping system. You also need to attach the physical [Customs declaration form CN22](#) or [CN23](#) to items (excluding items of general correspondence) you're sending to destinations that are not in the same customs union. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) requests that these are completed accurately and in full, to facilitate a rapid clearance. Since 1 January 2018 it's also been a requirement to add a 13-digit item identifier (known as a S10 barcode) on every item.

What is new, this year, is that you'll now need to provide the customs data to us electronically.

A reminder of the information you were already requested to provide prior to 1 January 2019

- A fully completed [Customs declaration form CN22](#) or [CN23](#) for items sent outside of the EU, including
 - Sender details (name, address, and if available, telephone number)
 - Recipient details (name, address including destination country, and if available, telephone number and email)
 - Item details in the form of an accurate and concise description of individual goods, quantity and measurements used, weight and value. It is absolutely critical that each item is shown as a separate line entry
 - A Harmonised System (HS) Trade Tariff code; find out more about Royal Mail's Managed HS Classification Services [here](#), contact your Account Manager or if you don't have a dedicated Account Manager, please [click here](#) for further information.
 - Country of origin of contents, which refers to where the goods were produced or assembled
 - Provide the amount of postage paid and separately specify other charges such as insurance costs
 - A Universal Postal Union (UPU) compliant S10 barcode so the electronic customs data can be linked to the exported goods
 - For tracked export goods, in addition a 2D barcode

How do I provide it?

The way you provide electronic customs data depends on which shipping system you use:

Royal Mail Click & Drop and Pro Shipping

Our user-friendly online platforms, [Click & Drop](#) and [Pro Shipping](#) allow you to enter the information required to generate electronic customs data files and also print the required labels to send items abroad, incl. barcodes for your parcel, CN22 or CN23 and a dispatch note. [Watch our video](#) for a guide on how to complete all the required customs information using Click & Drop.

What's new as of 1 January 2019

- The data you were already requested to provide will now also need to be provided electronically in the pre-advice you send to us

Some benefits of using Click & Drop or Pro Shipping:

- You enter the data into the system, which will print out all the required labels for you to affix onto the parcel – ensuring you meet the requirements for all destinations
- You should no longer have to write labels out manually which will save you time
- If you post a lot of items, you can build up a product catalogue, so that you can enter repeat information with a click instead of having to type / write it out again for each item
- As the data is sent ahead of the item, this should allow for a more seamless Customs process in the country of destination

Your own shipping solution (COSS), Shipping APIs (SAPI) and iShipper

We have also updated the COSS and SAPI specifications so that you can provide the right data fields. This includes the addition of the item identifier (UPU standard S10 1D barcode) that is required for overseas Posts to be able to access the data and provide it to their import customs agency for clearance. iShipper follows the same specifications as COSS and has also been updated.

International Franking Users

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) has mandated that any international items containing goods must have an item unique identifier (known as a S10 barcode) attached. Items that do not have an S10 barcode attached may be delayed or even returned to the sender. We want to ensure that this doesn't happen to franked items and that franked items meet international mail standards for goods being sent abroad.

To make this easy for franking customers, S10 barcode labels have been provided to franking customers. Simply stick one label onto each item you are sending abroad containing goods, along with a physical CN22 or CN23 customs form (for destinations that aren't in the same customs union as the UK). To order more labels visit royalmail.com/maillsupplies. In future the barcodes will need to contain electronic customs data and we will be in touch when a process has been finalised.

What is the Trade Tariff or Harmonised System (HS Code and where can I find it?)

The Trade Tariff or HS Code is a set of digits used to categorise goods for Customs charging. Royal Mail provides an HS code categorisation service for all your items. Please contact your Account Manager or, if you haven't got a dedicated Account Manager, please [click here](#) for further information. Royal Mail's Click & Drop allows you to save the HS code when you add it to a product, meaning you only need to enter the details once.

For more information on HS Code and guidance on the level of detail needed in the description field, please see more information here: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/nomenclature/overview/hs-multi-purposes-tool.aspx>.

You can find the HMRC Trade Tariff Codes here: <https://www.trade-tariff.service.gov.uk/trade-tariff/sections>. To use it, simply type in a description of your item(s) and the website tool will generate your code. For further assistance contact your Account Manager.

Why should I provide the Trade Tariff (HS) Code?

Provision of the Trade Tariff Code is requested for commercial items to help in the Customs clearance process. This is because the Trade Tariff Code lets the destination Post know electronically what is in the item, enabling accurate Customs charging and simplified Customs clearance. If the Trade Tariff Code is not completed or completed incorrectly then the wrong charges could be applied, or in some cases, Customs authorities may stop the parcel and examine it, potentially delaying its journey – they might even reject it and send the item(s) back to you.

Will this same level of detail be required on the CN22 / CN23?

Yes. [Click & Drop](#) and [Pro Shipping](#) will generate a printable CN22 / CN23 label containing all the information provided electronically, including description and HS Code etc. Where a customer is using their own systems, the electronic data should match what is on the physical declaration.

Do I need to supply information for goods being posted to both the EU and the rest of the world?

From January 2021, customs data needs to be supplied whenever an item is required to go through Customs.

Will items now take longer to leave the UK?

Our despatch times should be the same or quicker as we are able to scan barcoded items with more speed.

Recipient countries that use electronic customs data for processing may also be able to clear items more quickly.

How will this affect overseas shipping pricing from Royal Mail?

To recognise the additional work providing this electronic data may require, we have introduced a 2% discount on your international supplement – as long as you provide accurate and complete customs data and apply an S10 Barcode on your items. This discount will apply for all business contract products that do not have a letter format product code.

What if I cannot provide any electronic data because I am currently using a manual process?

If only manual data (i.e. CN22 or CN23 label only) is provided then this could result in the item being cleared manually; it may be opened, examined and therefore be delayed. If electronic data in the receiving country is required, your customer may incur fees or in the worst instance, the item may not be accepted into the destination country.

Therefore, we recommend you move from a manual process to inputting electronic customs data. This can be done via our shipping system, [Click & Drop](#) and [Pro Shipping](#), which will capture and transmit all of the required data. This electronic process is simple to set up, user-friendly and by producing all required labels, saves time in manually writing labels and commercial invoices.

What is the difference between a CN22 and a CN23?

CN23s are used for posting items with a value of £270 and above, whereas CN22s are used for goods valued at less than £270. For detailed instructions on how to fill in customs declarations forms [CN22](#) and [CN23](#) please see [Help with customs and sending goods abroad](#).

Are there any changes to the CN22 / CN23 documents?

No – the change is that the information provided on them will need to be submitted electronically. You should already be completing CN22s and CN23s fully. The CN22/CN23 label needs to be affixed on the outside of the item as before.

Does the CN22 / CN23 still need to be displayed on the outside of items?

Yes, you still need to show the CN22 / CN23 on the outside of your items. If the CN22/CN23 are too large to fit on your item, you can then fold it and attach it to the item, ensuring that as much information as possible is on the visible side of the item.

I use a 3rd party shipping system; what do I need to do?

The specifications for providers of other shipping systems have been updated and shared; these companies have been advised that this data must be captured and provided. Easypost, Iforce, Intersoft, Linnworks, Madcapsule, Scurri, ShipStation, Smartfreight, Sorted, Storefeeder, Veeqo and Zenstores all provide electronic customs data and the correct 1D barcode. For more information please contact your provider.

Will there be any additional charges for manually input customs data?

Some destinations are charging to manually input Customs data, so there would no longer be an additional processing charge if you move to electronic Customs data.

Does the requirement to provide data electronically apply to large letters or 'flats'?

Yes it does. Wherever a mail piece contains goods or gifts (with the exception of items of correspondence), it is required to go through customs clearance and will need to be accompanied by electronic customs data.

Will there be any changes to barcodes?

The electronic customs data will be encoded in a UPU standard S10 / 1D barcode. This means there will be two barcodes on your label rather than the one that you had before. This is because we need the 2D barcode for processing in the UK. The UPU standard requires electronic data to be in the S10 / 1D format. If you are using Royal Mail's Click & Drop or Pro Shipping, there will be an S10 barcode automatically applied as required. If you are using your own shipping solution (COSS), a Royal Mail Shipping API (SAPI) or another shipping platform provider, the requirements have been outlined in the specifications. Updates on which platforms are 'electronic data ready' can be found on our website www.royalmail.com/electronic-customs-data.

Concerned about Data Protection?

Some customers are concerned about supplying recipient contact details for data protection reasons. We manage all customer data according to the [Royal Mail General Terms and Conditions](#) and our [Privacy Policy](#); all recipient contact details are protected by these policies including telephone numbers and email addresses when provided. The information we share with overseas Posts in order to deliver items and notify recipients is also protected under our existing Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy by means of a Data Sharing Agreement, which we have with each Post, and a further agreement between us and the International Post Corporation (IPC). No data can be shared with overseas Posts or the IPC without these Data Sharing Agreements in place so there is effectively no difference in the level of protection of data when sharing electronic customs data with overseas destinations.

What good looks like: how to populate the required fields.

The below table provides an overview for each of the required customs fields and explains how they need to be populated. There are also examples of good field values.

Electronic Customs Mandatory* Postal Fields – Click & Drop

* In addition to the shipping platform specified data, required to send an item

Fields available

Click & Drop Field Name	Description of Field	Status from 1st January 2021	Best Practices for Efficient Processing
"Company"	The despatching business name	Mandatory	This is maintained in Settings > Company Address
"Address line 1"	The first lines of the sender's despatching) site	Mandatory	This is maintained in Settings > Company Address
"City"	The post town of the despatching site	Mandatory	This is maintained in Settings > Company Address
"Postcode"	The postcode of the despatching site	Mandatory	This is maintained in Settings > Company Address
"Country"	The country of the despatching site	Mandatory	This is maintained in Settings > Company Address
"Date and sender's signature" & "Automatically sign and date customs declaration documents"***	Name of person nominated to sign the declaration:"I declare that the particulars given in this declaration are correct..."	Mandatory	This is maintained in Settings > Default Customs Information
"Customs declaration categories"	The type of items you are sending, e.g Gift/Documents/Other	Mandatory	This is maintained in Settings > Default Customs Information
"City"	The post town of the delivery address	Mandatory	Captured in the Address section of Create order
"Country"	The delivery country	Mandatory	Captured in the Address section of Create order
"Full name" & "Last name"	The named recipient	Mandatory	Captured in the Address section of Create order
"Currency"	Currency code for all values relating to the units & item's customs declaration	Mandatory	Captured in Create order
"Shipping cost"	Postage paid by the sender	Mandatory	Captured in Create order
"Quantity"	Number of units in the package	Mandatory	Captured through the 'Add products' function in Create order
"Customs description"	Description of contents (units) e.g. "Bolts 2 pack x 50" for 2 pack containing 50 bolts each	Mandatory	Captured through the 'Add products' function in Create order
"Country of origin"	The country of origin for the unit	Mandatory	Captured through the 'Add products' function in Create order
"Unit price"	The individual unit value	Mandatory	Captured through the 'Add products' function in Create order
"Unit weight"	Weight per individual unit in package	Mandatory	Captured through the 'Add products' function in Create order
"Customs code"	The HS or Tariff (Customs) Code for the unit	Mandatory	Captured through the 'Add products' function in Create order
"Weight"	The gross weight of the units in the item	Mandatory	Captured through the 'Create order and apply postage' function in Create Order or the 'Apply postage' function in your Orders screen

Electronic Customs Mandatory* Postal Fields – Pro Shipping

* In addition to the shipping platform specified data, required to send an item

Fields available

Click & Drop Field Name	Description of Field	Status from 1st January 2021	Best Practices for Efficient Processing
"Contact Name"	The named recipient	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
"Town"	The Post town of the Delivery Address	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
"Country"	The delivery country	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
"Total Weight"	The gross weight of the units in the item, expressed in Kilogram & 3Decimal places	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Item Info
"Qty"	Number of units/items in the package	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
"Desc"	Description of contents (units) e.g. "Bolts 2 pack x 50" for 2 pack containing 50 bolts each	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
"Country Code"	The country of origin for the unit	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
"Val"	The individual unit value	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
The currency drop down besides the "Val" field	Currency code for all values relating to the items customs declaration	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
"Weight"	Weight per individual content item	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
"HS Code"	The HS or Tariff (Customs) Code for the Unit	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Shipment Info
"Contents Type"	The type of item you are sending, e.g Gift/Documents/Other	Mandatory	Captured in Enter Your Item Info
"Customer Name"	The despatching business name	Mandatory	This is maintained by the Customer Experience team
"Address"	The first lines of the sender's (despatching) site	Mandatory	This is maintained by the Customer Experience team
"Town"	The Post town of the despatching site	Mandatory	This is maintained by the Customer Experience team
"Postcode"	The Postcode of the despatching site	Mandatory	This is maintained by the Customer Experience team
"Country"	The Country of the despatching site	Mandatory	This is maintained by the Customer Experience team

Fields to be made available soon – Update to follow

New Field	Description of Field	Status from 1st January 2021
A new field for: Senders Name for Declaration	Name of person nominated to sign the declaration	Mandatory
A new field for: Shipping cost	Postage paid by the sender	Mandatory