

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Customs And Border Protection Continues Implementation Of Cargo Automation Tech In U.S. Virgin Islands

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Back in 2016, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) [started the process](#) to find a practical way to incorporate the U.S. Virgin Islands into the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) in order [to expedite the importation process](#).

Fast forward to Aug. 2019, in an event at the Ron De Lugo Federal Building in St. Thomas titled “Paving the way forward: Transforming the V.I. Trade through Technology”, CBP updated the USVI trade community on the implementation the cargo automation initiatives, CBP has made known via release.

“Only through a continued commitment to a collaborative approach with the local trade community will we truly accomplish our automation objectives,” stated Todd Bellew area port director for the US Virgin Islands.

The Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) is the system through which the trade community reports imports and exports and the government determines admissibility, CBP said.

To familiarize the trade community with the implementation of the electronic submission process using ACE, members of the entry specialist team and Daniel Yannone of Beep Business services provided a live demonstration, CBP said.

“Stakeholder input continues to be the key to the success of automating the cargo process in the USVI,” stated Marcia Murrell, assistant area port director for trade. “We look forward to the continued support of our trade community as we simplify the cargo process.”

In addition to updates on the automation process, CBP Agriculture Specialist Carmen Rodriguez advised stakeholders how to clear imported shipments efficiently by using the APHIS Fruits and Vegetables Import Requirements (FAVIR) database.

The FAVIR database is a public website that allows customers to search for fruits and vegetables by commodity or country, providing a quick and easy way for users to determine basic entry requirements for their specific products, according to CBP.

Among other topics discussed were the area port’s efforts to combat the importation of counterfeit prescription and other counterfeit merchandise. “Purchasing prescription medicine can be dangerous and pose a great risk to your health,” explained SCBPO Latisha Cannings. “Proceeds from the sales of illicit and counterfeit goods can have a negative impact on the economy.”

From the trade event, CBP’s USVI Area Port expects to continue working with its stakeholders and trade community in the implementation of the cargo automation initiatives.

The implementation of the cargo automation initiatives comes almost two years after initial implementation plans were disrupted by the devastating hurricanes Irma and Maria that wreaked havoc to the USVI. To this day, the main Cargo Office facility remains closed.