

**THE OCEANOGRAPHER'S GUIDE TO ISPM-15**  
Shipping Wooden Packaging Across International Borders  
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## 1. Background.

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is a treaty that provides for the protection of agricultural and non-agricultural plant species from exotic diseases and pests. Originally drafted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, it has been in force since 1952 and is currently signed by 159 nations. Operational standards developed under IPPC are known as International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures or ISPMs.

ISPM 15, adopted in 2002, is entitled "Guidelines for regulating wood packaging material in international trade", and is intended to prevent the spread of plant pests in wood packaging. Although the biggest offenders in this regard are minimally processed pallets and bark-covered timber shoring used in freighters, the regulations apply to all wood packaging crossing international borders.



An Asian Long-horned beetle on a damaged tree trunk.

A dramatic example of such a pest species is the Asian Long-horned Beetle (ALB), *Anoplophora glabripennis*. Travelling in wooden crates from China, the ALB was first detected in the United States in 1996. This large (3-5 cm) insect lives in many species of hardwood trees, eating large holes through the wood and eventually killing the tree. If the ALB were to become widespread throughout the USA, tremendous damage would be done to both forests and the timber industry.

A pitched battle is presently being fought to prevent the ALB from spreading beyond its current limited range in the New York and Chicago metropolitan areas. Infected trees are cut down as soon as they are identified, chipped in place to well below ground level, and the chips incinerated. Surrounding areas are then closely monitored for two years to insure no additional infestation has

taken place.

## 2. Enforcement Status.

Thirty-two countries and the European Union currently enforce some level of compliance with ISPM 15 when importing wooden packaging. As of July 5, 2006, the United States Customs Service will refuse entry to any wooden package that does not comply with ISPM 15.

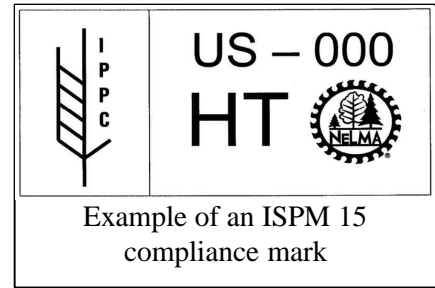
## 3. Compliance.

There are several methods to ensure that packaging is not in violation of ISPM 15:

- a) Packaging without wood components (composed of plastic, fiberglass, metal, etc.) is obviously exempt from ISPM 15.
- b) Packaging that does not have to pass through customs may get by, for example if you load a crate on your research vessel in your home country and never take it off the boat when visiting a foreign port. Please note however that depending on the level of Customs inspection, you may have problems getting the crate off the boat when you return to your home country.
- c) Packaging where all wooden components are processed (plywood, chipboard) is inherently compliant with ISPM 15. It may be prudent to insert language to this effect in shipping paperwork; one possible statement appears below. Note that many crates are traditionally built with sawn wood stringers and reinforcement blocks and therefore would NOT be inherently compliant. Use of thick plywood for stringers and blocks in crate construction is possible but may require modified techniques that take into account (for example) the fact that plywood is not equally strong in all directions.

- d) Sawn wood components may be treated with chemicals or heat by a certified firm to destroy all possible plant pests. Such wood is then marked with an ISPM 15 compliance mark.

The transport crates supplied by Seabird Electronics contain sawn wood components. New crates manufactured by Seabird are ISPM 15 compliant. Owners of older crates may need to purchase ISPM 15 compliant packaging or treat their existing packaging (see below) if they plan to ship their equipment across international borders.



- e) Existing wooden packaging may be treated with heat or chemicals by a certified firm to make it ISPM 15 compliant. Such packaging then receives a compliance mark as above. A number of companies in the USA provide this service to art museums and other organizations with extensive inventories of expensive crates. Heat treatment of a single crate may cost a few hundred USD, however for about \$2,000 companies will treat all the crates that fit in a 4 x 4 x 8 meter heat treatment room. A good way to search for these companies is to submit "Heat Treatment Services Wooden Packaging" to your preferred Internet search engine (Google, Yahoo, etc.).

#### 4. Suggested language.

It may be prudent to include language in your shipping paperwork that demonstrates your recognition of and compliance with ISPM 15. Two examples follow:

If none of your containers contain sawn wooden components: "The wood packaging materials used in this shipment are in compliance with the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures, Publication 15, March 2002 (ISPM 15). The materials used consist of processed wood material only with no solid sawn wood components."

If any of your containers are ISPM 15 compliant by virtue of being heat or chemical treated and are stamped with an ISPM compliance mark: "The wood packaging materials used in this shipment are in compliance with the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures, Publication 15, March 2002 (ISPM 15). The materials used consist of processed wood material and solid sawn wood subjected to approved heat or chemical treatment. Those packages that use treated wood have been certified as being compliant with ISPM 15 and the Internal National Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and are so marked by an approved and inspected agent of the American Lumber Standard Committee. [the approval agency will vary depending on the country of manufacture of the packaging].

#### 5. Acknowledgement.

Thanks to Rick Baumann, Operations Manager of Sea Bird Electronics, Inc. for his generous assistance and for supplying examples of compliance statements.

#### 6. For further information.

International Plant Protection Convention:  
<http://www.ippc.int>

ISPM 15:  
<https://www.ippc.int/servlet/CDSServlet?status=ND0xMzM5OSY2PWVuJmZPSomMzc9a29z>

US Animal and plant health inspection service wooden packing materials information. Includes status of import and export restrictions to and from specific countries:  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/wpm/index.html>

American Lumber Standards Committee wood packaging materials information page. Includes a list of suppliers of treated ISPM-compliant sawn lumber components.  
[http://www.alsc.org/WPM\\_programinfo\\_mod.htm](http://www.alsc.org/WPM_programinfo_mod.htm)

The Asian Long-horned beetle:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Asian\\_long-horned\\_beetle&oldid=79695194](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Asian_long-horned_beetle&oldid=79695194)