

Paperless customs reporting system launches

The South African Revenue Service (Sars) will introduce a new electronic cargo reporting system which will be able to track the movement of cargo coming into and leaving the country this weekend.



The paperless cargo reporting system will bring an end to one of the last remaining paper-based processes in Sars. It will provide customs officials with the capability to track goods from beginning to end.

Chief officer of customs and excise, Teboho Mokoena, says the electronic reporting system will expedite the processing of legitimate trade and improve the management of risk for goods coming in and leaving the country.

Customs clients impacted by the new electronic reporting system include shipping lines, airlines, the national rail carrier, road hauliers, freight forwarders, port and airport authorities, terminal operators, wharf operators, transit shed operators, licensees of depots and registered agents.

Following international trends

South Africa will be following international trends with the introduction of advance reporting of containerised cargo destined for South African ports. This reporting requires carriers and forwarders to submit 'advance loading notices' to Sars customs at both master and house bill of lading levels, 24 hours prior to vessel departure.

The implementation of the electronic reporting requirements falls under customs' reporting of conveyances and goods (RCG) project, which is one of three main pillars of Sars' new customs acts programme (NCAP).

Since the Customs Control Act and Customs Duty Act were published in the *Government Gazette* in 2014, much work has been taking place in SARS to finalise rules to the acts, develop the required systems and ensure trade readiness for the implementation.

RCG goes live

As the new acts will only be operationalised on a date yet to be announced by the president, it was decided to introduce certain elements of the new legislation under the current Customs and Excise Act, 1964.

The first phase of NCAP to go live is RCG, albeit under the current 1964 Act. Under RCG, it will be mandatory for all cargo reporters in the air, sea, rail and road industries and involved in the movement of international cargo to submit reports to Sars electronically.

One of the benefits to trade of electronic cargo reporting is that it will save on costs involved in paper reporting. For example, carriers can spend hundreds of thousands of rand a year just in the paper and administrative costs associated with submitting paper manifests to Sars offices.

The impact on land clients will be minimal as most road carriers have already been submitting electronic reports since MPR was introduced in 2016.

However, for many sea and air modality clients, who have never submitted electronic reports before, the implementation may take more time to get used to.

During the go-live, Sars will have an operations support centre, which clients can contact by emailing OSC@sars.gov.za. For more information, customs clients can go to the Sars [website](#).

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