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Know before you export

Is your product subject to export controls?

Do you need an export permit for your product? This is a key question that's often overlooked. In fact, many Canadian exporters will only discover the answer when their product hits a roadblock at customs.



Satellites, whether for military or civilian use, require export permits.

One way to avoid this potentially costly setback is to contact International Trade Canada's Export Controls Division (ECD), the same federal division that works with the Canada Border Services Agency to enforce Canada's export control regulations.

ECD permit officers assist Canadian companies and can help you navigate the regulations, determine whether you need a permit and guide you through the process from start to finish. ECD also offers assessment services to help you classify products. For many companies, self-assessment is no easy feat given that some products may have a "dual use"

(a civilian and military application, for example) while others have complex technical specifications, requiring an expert to evaluate them. In these cases, ECD uses both government and industry engineering expertise to assist in classification. Most important, all your information, including product and technology data, is kept strictly confidential.

For some exports, getting a permit can take about 10 business days, while military and strategic goods going to specific destinations may take six weeks or more to process. Either way, determining beforehand whether you need a permit is key.

A balancing act

For the ECD, it's a careful balancing act—to safeguard Canadian exports while protecting security and meeting international trade obligations. ECD has as much interest in protecting Canadian trade as it does in guarding against the export of strategic goods. Of course, this may be cold comfort when your shipment is stalled at customs. Export controls are designed to protect trade interests by ensuring controlled items are not redirected to unacceptable uses or destinations causing embarrassment for Canada or the exporting company.

This may be a shock to you, but your product or technology could be used for purposes that

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