Air Cargo Screening Changes Planned for 2021

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New international security standards for the transport of air cargo on all-cargo aircraft are slated to take effect next year. The Transportation Security Administration is accepting through July 9 information from the air cargo industry (including manufacturers, shippers, suppliers, warehouses, e-commerce fulfillment centers, third-party logistics providers, and air carriers) on how to reduce the burden of complying with these standards.

By June 30, 2021, member countries of the International Civil Aviation Organization must ensure that all international air cargo transported on commercial aircraft is either (1) screened to a level intended to identify and/or detect the presence of concealed explosive devices or (2) under appropriate security controls throughout the cargo supply chain to prevent the introduction of concealed explosive devices.

TSA states that while its existing regulatory structure permits it to impose a 100 percent screening requirement for all-cargo aircraft, such a requirement would increase the cost of air cargo transportation. TSA is therefore seeking to identify alternatives that maximize security benefits without imposing excessive, unjustified, or unnecessary costs.

Specifically, TSA is considering the development of a new regulation, order, or security program that would enable manufacturers, warehouse operators, or other shipping or logistics services providers to be recognized by TSA as having a system of security controls sufficient to allow them to introduce cargo into the secure supply chain for all-cargo aircraft without a need for screening. TSA is seeking public comment on the operational concerns, costs, and benefits of such a program, which would align conceptually with TSA’s Certified Cargo Screening Standard Security Program.

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