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## **Understanding Advance Commercial Information (ACI) Requirements for Groupage Shipments to **Canada****

Shared container service continues to lead the way globally.

As international moving regulations continue to evolve, it is important for all overseas partners and agents shipping groupage containers to Canada to understand the Advance Commercial Information (ACI) requirements mandated by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

Failure to comply can result in significant delays, storage costs, penalties, and operational challenges. This article explains what ACI is, why it is required, and how the process works when shipping groupage containers to Canada.

### **What is ACI?**

Advance Commercial Information (ACI) is a CBSA requirement that requires shipment information to be submitted electronically before cargo departs its origin country for Canada.

For the international moving industry, ACI is particularly important for groupage shipments (consolidated containers) because the container is typically consigned to the destination agent in Canada rather than directly to the individual customers.

The ACI filing enables the consolidated container to be deconsolidated into individual shipment manifests upon arrival in Canada, allowing each shipment to be processed correctly and efficiently.

### **Why is ACI Required for Groupage Shipments?**

ACI requirements primarily affect groupage (consolidated) containers.



In other transportation modes and shipment types, such as:

- Full Container Load (FCL)
- Less than Container Load (LCL)
- Air Shipments

The cargo is generally consigned directly to the customer, and the necessary cargo information is already available within the transportation documentation through the shipping line or airline. If consignment is not directly to the customer – an ACI filing may be required.

With groupage shipments, however, the container is often consigned to the destination agent (for example, AMJ International) and contains multiple individual customer shipments. ACI filing allows CBSA to identify and process each shipment within the consolidated container before arrival.

### **When Must ACI Be Filed?**

ACI must be filed before the shipment departs from origin.

To ensure compliance, we recommend all required information and supporting documents be provided 10 days before Estimate date of Departure (ETD) to ensure timely filing. In many cases, agents submit the required information too close to the ETD, which can delay the filing process.

Once the container has been loaded and key shipping details are available, the final submission can be completed prior to vessel departure.

### **Information Required for ACI Filing**

Partners and agents will be asked to complete the required ACI information form and provide all supporting shipment details.

Before the final ACI submission can be made, the following information is required:



1. Draft Seaway Bill
2. Container Number
3. Seal Number

This information must be provided **before departure** to ensure the filing is completed on time.

### **How the Filing Process Works**

#### **Step 1: Submit Required Documentation**

The origin agent provides the required shipment information and supporting documents to AMJ.

#### **Step 2: ACI Filing**

AMJ works with its in-house customs compliance team and filing broker to prepare and submit the ACI information to CBSA.

#### **Step 3: House Bill Issued**

Once the ACI filing has been successfully submitted, the broker issues a House Bill confirming the filing.

This document is then shared with the shipping line as evidence that the ACI requirements have been met.

#### **Step 4: Final Bill of Lading**

After the vessel has departed, the shipping line issues the final Bill of Lading (BL), which is linked to the ACI filing.

### **Arrival in Canada: Why ACI Matters**

Once the container arrives at its destination in Canada and is available for pickup, timing becomes critical.



## **Immediate Container Pickup**

With a properly filed ACI, AMJ can:

- Quickly deconsolidate the container
- Access the individual shipment information
- Arrange immediate pickup from the terminal
- Begin the customs clearance process without unnecessary delays

## **Limited Pickup Window**

In many cases, there is only a **24-hour window** to collect the container from the terminal before additional costs begin to accrue.

ACI compliance helps ensure the container can be picked up immediately upon availability.

## **Risks of Failing to File ACI**

Failure to submit ACI can have serious consequences:

### **Shipment Delays**

Without an ACI filing:

- The container cannot be properly deconsolidated.
- Individual shipments cannot be processed or cleared.
- AMJ cannot pick up or release the shipments within the container.

### **Additional Charges**

Delays will result in additional charges such as port storage, detention / demurrage costs and financial penalties.

### **Financial Penalties**

CBSA may issue penalties for non-compliance.



Current penalties can be as high as **CAD \$8,000 per container**, in addition to any storage and terminal-related costs incurred due to delays.

### **Best Practices for Overseas Agents**

To ensure smooth delivery of groupage shipments to Canada:

- ✓ Submit all required ACI information as early as possible.
- ✓ Provide the completed ACI form with accurate shipment details.
- ✓ Forward the Draft Seaway Bill, Container Number, and Seal Number immediately once available.
- ✓ Ensure all information is received prior to vessel departure.
- ✓ Maintain communication with AMJ throughout the process to avoid delays.

### **Conclusion**

ACI filing is now a critical part of the groupage shipping process into Canada. By submitting complete and accurate information before departure, overseas partners help ensure containers can be deconsolidated, picked up promptly, and delivered without unnecessary costs or delays.

AMJ remains committed to supporting our international partners through the ACI process and ensuring shipments move efficiently through Canada. Early documentation and timely communication remain the key to successful compliance and smooth delivery operations.

Please contact us at [international@amj.com](mailto:international@amj.com) if you have questions or would like to review this process together.

We appreciate your partnership and look forward to creating great moving experiences together.