



## *Importing Personal Property Into China*

### **CUSTOMS REGULATIONS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

#### **Customs Regulations:**

Client must arrive into China prior to arrival of the shipment and be present during Customs the clearance process. All shipments undergo an X-ray inspection with 20 - 30% of shipments being physically inspected by Customs Authority. Duty rates for Air shipments are typically 30% higher than Ocean shipments. If importing more than one (1) shipment, shipments must be declared together. Second shipments either Air or Ocean will be charged full tax and duty amounts.

Only one ocean and one air shipment allowed per Residence Permit. If the Destination is Beijing, these permits must be applied for at the same time.

Personal registration of owner of the goods and employer's registration must be approved before arrival of the shipment. Used household goods and personal effects are dutiable for Chinese persons holding a foreign passport and foreigners entering China for an extended period (not holding a Residence Card). For foreigners without a 1 year Work Permit & Residence Permit shipment cannot be cleared and will incur storage and demurrage. Those who have the permits but are less than 1 year will be charged full duties on entire shipment.

It is critical to have accurate packing and inventory lists. Conflicting lists create a long delay and potential financial penalties. Additional costs due to delays, destruction or return of shipment due to not adhering to Customs Regulations will be charged to the client or booking agent. Customs Permit and Inventory List must be identical. Baggage Declaration is required for some destination ports. Consult Destination Agent for requirements.

A VAT of 6% will be levied on all charges remitted to the carrier in China for both import and export, including ocean freight and all surcharges. This is a government tax which is applicable to tariff rated and contracted cargo. The tax does not apply when bill of lading charges are prepaid outside of China. Customs and quarantine clearance can take up to 2 weeks to complete.

**Returning Chinese** citizens without proof of foreign residency are subject to 100% full payment of duties for household goods and personal effects at POE/AOE. Returning nationals must have lived abroad for 1 year to import an ocean shipment and 6 months for air shipments.

### **Immigration Requirement changes by Province**

#### **Shanghai Port:**

**New Requirement: Inbound ocean shipments** - Labels on all incoming items must match the name on the passport that is used for Customs clearance. Discrepancies will cause the process to be stopped and require the client to be present to finish the exam. Additional charges will incur and other requirements may be imposed.

**New Requirement: Outbound ocean shipments for foreigners** – Export permits for HHG's will be granted automatically for shippers who apply with valid residence and work permits, provided these permits have been issued for at least 12 consecutive months and the export permit application is filed within the validity period. Those shorter than 12 months must provide an explanation letter. The origin agent in Shanghai will assist with the letter. Only long-term residents are allowed to import/export both household and personal effects to/from the PRC. Short-term residents are only allowed to import/export personal effects.

It is possible for a working spouse to hold a PRC Work Permit with a validity of 365 days or more with a Residence Permit valid for less than 365 days. In such instances, the transferee is eligible to import household (and personal) effects as their work permit meets the minimum validity requirement. Non-working (dependent) spouses are eligible for household and personal effects imports and are subject to the same rule – if their PRC Residence Permit is valid for 365 days or more, they can ship household and personal effects; if the validity is less than 365 days they can only ship personal effects. A valid Ocean Freight Booking must be provided along with original passport and work permit required. Due to the limited time; all relevant consignment and routing information must be available prior to packing. Delay in providing this information may result in delay of clearance and delay of returning passports to our clients. Customs and quarantine clearance can take up to 5 weeks to complete. Shipments that require storage in Shanghai due to destination country requirements may have to be routed through a different port of export as Shanghai customs will no longer allow storage of these shipments at the bonded warehouse. LCL traffic process is unaffected at the present time.

**Shanghai Airport: Returning citizens** are required to declare value on accompanying luggage on the Baggage Declaration Form. Amount declared will be deducted from the duty free allowance of 5,000RMB. Declaration over 5,000RMB incurs tax and duty to be paid at time of entry. Upon arrival of HHG's shipment the duty free amount of 5,000RMB minus declared luggage will be assessed tax and duty.



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**Beijing & Shanghai:** An Appointment Letter issued from the head office at origin, notarized by a foreign notary public bureau and legalized by the Chinese embassy at origin, along with applicant's passport copy also notarized by foreign notary public bureau and legalized by the Chinese embassy is required for the Representative Certificate for foreign employees who are assigned to work in a Representative Office. **Shenzhen:** Applicants are required to be physically present with a Destination Agent representative at the Public Security Bureau when submitting the residency application forms provided by the agent and one's original passport. The client will be issued a receipt. The process takes 6-12 working days. Once complete the client, accompanied with a Destination Agent representative will exchange the receipt for the Residency License and passport. This policy change affects initial and renewal applications. Consult your Destination Agent for further details regarding this new requirement. VAT of approximately 6% will be incurred on shipments into and out of Shanghai, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Wuchan, Chongqing ports.

**Xingang Port:** All household goods shipments transiting through Xingang port must ensure the container seal marks on the Bill of Lading be identical to the marks on the containers seal; including all numbers and letters. Any omissions may result in the container being detained and possibly sent to the Chinese Anti-Smuggling unit of Customs and may take up to two months before the container is released. Additional costs and possible fines will be incurred.

#### **2016 is a leap year (366 days)**

This will impact Work and Residence Permits. The total number of days on the permit needs to match the number of days in that specific annual cycle.

Permits starting on February 4th, 2016, need to end February 3rd, 2017 **(366 days)**

Permits starting on February 4th, 2017, need to end February 3rd, 2018 **(365 days)**

- Permits valid less than 366 (2016) or 365 (2017) will be treated as "short term assignments" and therefore only allowed basic HHG items such as clothes, personal effects, kitchenware etc. Furniture, appliances, electronics including desktop computers will not be allowed under that status

### Required Documents:

- Passport and Authorization letter – Original •  
Work Visa – Original, valid for 1 year
- Residence Permit- Original, valid for 1 year; those issued with less than 365 days and POE is Shanghai, will need to provide an explanation letter requesting exemption and to be granted preferential duty treatment. Employees of companies that do not qualify for multi-year must ensure the application for a Residence Permit is made on the day the Work Permit is issued.
- Employment Certification (preferable in Chinese) from employer's registered office or Chinese host organization attesting that customer will be either personnel of Foreign Resident Office or Foreign Expert
- Health Certificate – Full examination with blood tests to prove absence of communicable diseases •  
Appointment Letter – obtained from Representative Office at origin, notarized
- Customs Permit (must be approved prior to arrival of goods) •  
Customs Permit and Inventory list must be identical
  - Application for Customs Sealed Letter - three copies
  - Import Permit of Personal Effects: valid for 3 months
    - Shanghai Port: only those issued Work & Residence Permits with 366 days (2016) minimum validity will be granted Import Permits. An LCL shipment up to 5 cubic meters gross is allowed without an Import Permit
    - List of goods and quantity to be imported must be in Chinese
    - Must list ALL items planned for import within six (6) months from the date of approval of the application, even if not contained in the first shipment
- Ocean Bill of Lading/Air Way Bill – Prepaid and fax copy in advance to Destination Agent •  
Arrival Notice – Ocean shipments; to be completed by client upon arrival at port of entry
- Baggage Declaration Form – required for all shippers; obtain upon arrival at the airport and stamped by Customs Authority
- Certificate of Origin - may be required
- Detailed Inventory – in English or Chinese; items must be specifically listed & described: terms such as miscellaneous, PBO, drawer items, kitchen items, plastic container, wood box etc. are not allowed.

\*Inadequate descriptions on Pack Lists/ Inventories will cause additional inspection, duties, demurrage and potential penalties. For further clarification consult your service agent.

Shanghai ports: Discrepancies in item counts on inventories compared to original BL will cause shipment clearance to be halted until discrepancies are clarified by client. Customs Authority reserves the right to have the person appear in person to explain.

### **Diplomat Status:**

Household goods, automobiles and motorcycles may be imported duty and tax-free and without inspection. Diplomats must be physically present in China prior to their shipment's arrival to process Customs clearance. Clearance takes approximately 10 working days.

### **Required Documents:**

- Consulate Officer Certificate
- Passport w/Diplomatic Visa & Diplomatic Card - originals •  
Import Permit - obtained from the Embassy
- Notification Letter from the steamship line (available once the vessel arrives in port) •  
Ocean Bill of Lading and/or Airway bill - original
- Detailed Inventory - in English or Chinese
- Pro-forma Invoice

### **Returning Chinese Citizen:**

Must have visa from origin country. Must have worked abroad at least 12 months to import household goods duty free. Must not have visited China more than once within 15 days of return or be subject to pay Customs duty on entire shipment.

**Those returning on Chinese passports with POE of Shanghai refer to Customs Procedures for Shanghai.**

- Chinese Residence Certificate
  - Passport – Original,
  - Visa/green card – verifying residency abroad for a minimum of 12 months •  
Baggage Declaration Form – obtained upon arrival, stamped
  
  - Tobacco products – 800 cigarettes (400 for HKG, Taiwan & Macau permanent residents) allowed duty free; in excess is subject to duty
  - Alcohol – 4 bottles allowed for foreigners,
    - 2 bottles allowed for HKG, Macau, Taiwan and Chinese passport holders
    - Permanent Residents: consult Agent regarding other ports and confirm allowance •
- Alcohol not allowed into the port of Shanghai regardless of status**
- New Items – strongly discouraged from including in shipment if going through Shanghai ports •  
Furniture, lamps & golf clubs – returning Chinese are prohibited to import furniture
  - Perfume – “reasonable quantity” for personal use only
  
  - Books – require a letter of explanation, title, description of subject matter, location of purchase, value & total number of books: returning Chinese nationals can only import 10 books

- Antiques & Works of Art- recommended to photograph each one; antiques of Asian origin should be registered upon import to avoid issues upon re-exportation
- CD's and DVD's etc – the first 200 of each is duty free; 201 to the maximum of 500 incurs tax; items are subject to inspection,
- Appliances & Electronics new or used – Requires a separate Inventory List, must state; size, make, model & purchase value: 1 each: video camera, video recorder & portable word processor; in excess of amount is subject to tax & duties of 20%
- Computers - computers w/encryption capabilities require an approval of installed software prior to importation, other security software is usually allowed
- Portable & cordless phones – require an Import Permit •  
Golf Clubs – one set allowed duty free

NOTE: Tax and duty rates are subject to change and often vary depending on port of entry and the Customs officer handling the shipment. All Restricted /Dutiable item must be loaded near the container doors for easy inspection. Antiques must be declared upon arrival.

- Firearms, Weapons & Ammunition of any kind including firecrackers and replica/toy guns •  
Narcotics, Psychotropic substances, medication & anesthetics
- Pornography, obscene materials/publications, videos & software
- Food /beverages – only those with Diplomatic status can include in shipment •  
Reproductions of copyright publications & videos
- Seditious & treasonable materials, anti-communist/anti-China paraphernalia •  
Cigarette lighters of pistol or revolver shape
- Chewing tobacco & imitation tobacco products
- Chewing gum, toy coins & toy currency notes such as Monopoly money •  
Live animals on Endangered Species List
- Hides, horns, skins, furs, fossils, corals and items made from the Endangered Species List in accordance with the CITES convention
- Seeds, soil, fertilizer & pesticides •  
Billiard tables – Chengdu port only
- Grand & baby grand pianos, copy & fax machines, radio transmitters •  
Exposed, undeveloped film
- Maps or globes depicting Taiwan as independent or depicting borders other than the official borders of China are strictly forbidden and will be confiscated with possible fines levied. This includes maps of colonial times with markings such as Sinkiang, Manchuria, or foreign concessions.

Only dogs and cats are allowed importation into China. One pet is allowed per passport holder. Pets are subject to an in-house quarantine period of 30 - 45 days depending on airport of entry. Pets are subject to an exam at the residence by an inspector. A small fee is incurred.

**Required Documents:**

- Certificate of Health – 7 days before departure
- Vaccination Records – including rabies vaccine, must be over 30 days and under 1 year •
- Entry Recorder – within 2 weeks

Diplomat Status: Allowed import of one vehicle duty and tax free including motorcycles. Other foreigners are strongly discouraged from importing vehicle.

Only left hand vehicles with no conversion are allowed.

Vehicles manufactured prior to 1 January 2005 will not be registered without undergoing a rigorous exam costing about 1,200.00USD. All vehicles being registered in Beijing for the first time must meet EURO IV standards. Diesel vehicles are prohibited.

**Required Documents:**

- Log book w/chassis & engine numbers, VIN number & detailed vehicle description •
- Import Permit – approved by Customs prior to importation into China
- Invoice, Registration & Title – originals, Any other documents supporting age & value

**NOTES:**

Terms: Permanent residents of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau are not PRC citizens. Long-term residents are all non-PRC citizens holding either a PRC Work Permit and/or Residence Permit valid for 365 days or more. Short-term residents are all non-PRC citizens holding either a PRC Work Permit and/or Residence Permit valid for less than 365

Entry & Exit Requirements: New entry regulations have impact on the relocation processes. Residence Permits take 15 working days now instead of 5. Foreigners will arrive with their visa, obtain the Work & Medical Permits while awaiting the Residence Permit. Chinese law requires foreign citizens living in China to carry their Residence Permit with them at all times. If you are found not to be in compliance, you will be subject to fines and/or deportation. You must obtain an exit visa to leave China. If you have overstayed your visa, you must apply for an extension from [the Police Security Bureau](#) before flying out. If you are a U.S. Lawful Permanent Resident, make sure you have up-to-date U.S. residence documentation, especially your valid Permanent Resident Card ("Green Card"), to avoid any delays when leaving China or re-entering the United States.

China considers a child born in China to hold Chinese citizenship if one parent is a Chinese national, even if the child applies for and receives a U.S. passport while in China. In such cases, when you want to travel out of China with your child, you should contact the local Public Security Bureau for information on obtaining a travel document (*lu xing zheng*).

Crime: U.S. citizens have been detained and expelled for distributing religious literature. Sentences range from three to five years' imprisonment, if convicted. Chinese customs authorities have enforced strict regulations concerning the importation of religious literature, including Bibles. Foreigners may bring only a

"reasonable" amount of religious literature for personal use

Health: Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to and foreign residents of China. Verify the restrictions with the [Embassy of China](#) prior to departure. Hepatitis E is prevalent in northeastern and northwestern China and hepatitis A is common across the country. Hepatitis B is highly endemic. Haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome is endemic. Precautions should be taken against Japanese encephalitis, particularly in rural areas. There are still habitual occurrences of avian influenza (bird flu) and the SARS virus.

Fumigation of Wood Packing Materials: The General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China published requirements adopting ISPM 15 for wood packaging material (WPM). IPPC markings must be on every crate & case, especially if arriving into Shanghai port. Any offending wood crating will be disposed of, leaving fragile items at risk of damage. Declared & undeclared food items are also being confiscated.

#### **Improperly certified shipments are subject to one of three actions**

The shipment can be returned to origin.

The shipment can be separated from the packing material, at the importer's expense. The packing material would be destroyed.

If the shipment cannot be separated from the packing material and is not returned to origin, then both the shipment and packing material would be destroyed.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

Links Moving China: Pudong, Shanghai PR China

AGS Four Winds: Shanghai, China

Asian Tigers - China

Embassy of China: <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/>

Department of State: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1089.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1089.html) Smart

Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/> US

Embassy; Beijing, China: <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/>

U.S. Consulate General; Shanghai: <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/> U.S.

Consulate General; Shenyang: <http://shenyang.usembassy-china.org.cn/> U.S.

Consulate General; Chengdu: <http://chengdu.usembassy-china.org.cn/> U.S.

Consulate General; Guanzhou: <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/>

The information presented herein is based on customs data available at the time of printing and is frequently subject to change without notice. It is the responsibility of the owner or importer of the household goods to comply with the current customs restrictions, regulations, and duties of the country to which the goods are imported. We strongly advise customers to contact the consulate or embassy of the destination country for the most current information on customs regulations, restrictions and duties for importing household goods, personal effects and vehicles