



**Australian Government**

**Australian Customs and  
Border Protection Service**

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**BEST PRACTICE GUIDE**  
**A GUIDE TO IMPROVING INDUSTRY CLIENT**  
**INTERACTION WITH THE CCF AND THE ICS**

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## Document Location

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## Revision History

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All updates to this document are coordinated through the Customs Cargo Business Support unit. Any changes or additions should be forwarded to [Industry.Engagement@customs.gov.au](mailto:Industry.Engagement@customs.gov.au).

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# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE</b> .....	<b>2</b>
2.1	CHANGE IN BUSINESS PRACTICE.....	2
2.2	OPTIMUM EDI INTERCHANGE SIZE .....	2
2.3	EDI DELIVERY TO CUSTOMS .....	3
2.4	REPORT MASTER AIR WAYBILL BEFORE HOUSE AIR WAYBILL AIR CARGO REPORTS WHERE POSSIBLE .....	3
2.5	REPORT AIRLINE CODE, FLIGHT NUMBER, ESTIMATED ARRIVAL DATE AND DISCHARGE PORT ACCURATELY ON HOUSE AIR WAYBILLS .....	3
2.6	CARGO REPORTING.....	3
2.7	USE QUEUE LEVEL INFORMATION TO SCHEDULE MESSAGE TRANSMISSION.....	3
<b>3</b>	<b>OUTAGES</b> .....	<b>4</b>

# 1 Background

The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS) provides IT resources based on both known user requirements and planned capacity needs. The Customs Connect facility (CCF) and the Integrated Cargo System (ICS) are sized to service an average peak demand with known annual growth rates. As with all IT resources there are times when demand can outstrip supply and systems become overloaded and processing times suffer. In the case of the CCF and the ICS this equates to a longer response time to EDI messages.

This practice guide is targeted at high volume users and provides suggestions to assist clients in achieving the best response times from our systems. We believe that by identifying when the ICS is least busy and using these quieter times combined with some suggested user modifications will maximise system response times. The practice statement recommendations are a suggested guideline. While we are referring mainly to the ICS the recommendations equally apply to the CCF as well.

There are times when the ICS is known to be running at peak levels due to the larger number of users and messages using the ICS. This is generally accepted as Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 17:00 excluding public holidays. These are what we will refer to as core hours. Outside of these times are known as noncore hours.

The graph in Figure 1 below shows a typical day where the ICS is busiest by percentage of use during core hour's, with far less activity during the noncore hours.

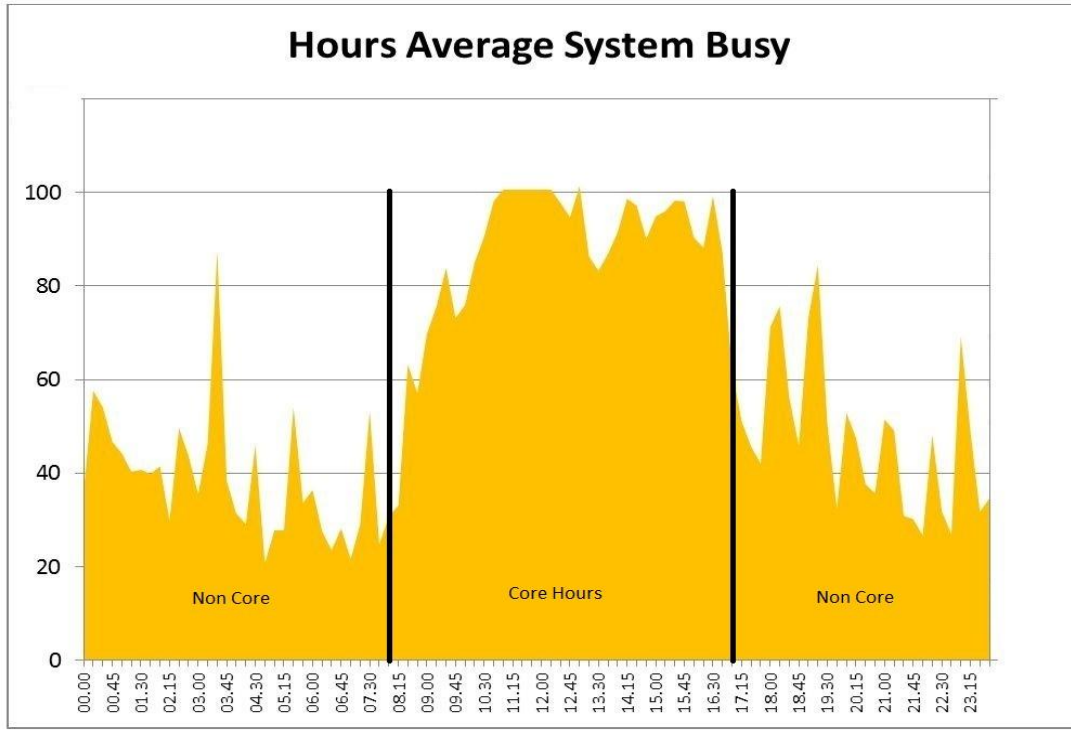


Figure 1

The spikes in noncore hours are when Industry Clients send EDI message streams to be processed.

On weekends and public holidays low usage is also experienced, similar to noncore as depicted in the graph.

## 2 Best Practice Guidance

The simple recommendation is, wherever possible, to send EDI messages to the ICS in noncore hours. This will lessen the impact on the overall user base of the ICS and maximise ICS response times.

There are other work practices that will aid ACBPS in providing a more responsive system. These are listed as following.

### 2.1 Change in business practice

If your organisation is planning to change its message work profile and/or message volumes, please inform ACBPS via the Customs Information and Support Centre (CI&SC) or ICS Business Support. This will allow ACBPS to work with industry to understand and assess any potential impact upon the ICS and include this information into our future capacity planning processes.

### 2.2 Optimum EDI Interchange Size

The optimum size for each EDI interchange is 100 messages; this is the most efficient size that allows for high throughput and using minimal system resources.

## **2.3 EDI delivery to Customs**

Where your organisation has a business requirement to send ACBPS a large numbers of EDI messages at any time of day the following structure is suggested

- Interchanges containing 100 messages
- A maximum of 25 interchanges at a time (a group)
- Groups of interchanges sent 10 minutes apart

This approach will have the overall effect of reducing queuing and improving turnaround times of message processing.

## **2.4 Report Master Air Waybill before House Air Waybill Air Cargo Reports where possible**

There are details (Flight, Discharge Port, and Estimated Arrival Date) on Master Air Waybill cargo reports which are more accurate than those reported on the House Air Waybills under the same Master Bill. When the Master is reported, all House Bills previously reported under the same Master Bill are inspected and updated with the more accurate details from the Master Bill. Where possible we need to improve the accuracy of the House Bill details to ensure there is little variance with the Master Bill. By doing so this lessens the derivation procedures and the overall processing load on the system.

Where an Industry Client handles the reporting of both the Master and House Bills and the data for the House Bills are available at the time the Master Bill is ready for submission to ACBPS, it is recommended that the Master Bill be sent to ACBPS ahead of the House Bills. The House Bills can be sent after a small delay, say 5 minutes, to allow the processing of the Master Bill to complete.

## **2.5 Report Airline Code, Flight Number, Estimated Arrival Date and Discharge Port accurately on House Air Waybills**

Inaccurate detail in the above fields on a House Bill will require updating when the Master Bill is reported. Where the House Bills are reported before the Master Bill and the details are already correct, the system does not need to update the House Bill records, hence also avoiding the need to recalculate cargo status and the associated outbound messaging. With the potentially large number of House Bills under a Master Bill, there will be savings in system processing when these updates can be avoided.

## **2.6 Cargo Reporting**

The lodging Cargo Reports of outside of core hours, wherever possible, will facilitate the best utilisation of the system.

## **2.7 Use queue level information to schedule message transmission**

Industry Clients are able to use the Cargo System Status Service (CSSS) web service to check the queue level before transmitting messages to ACBPS. This way Industry can anticipate whether there will likely be any delays in responses from ACBPS. The advantage for ACBPS, if more

Industry Clients adopt this strategy, is a better spread of the workload across the day and an improvement in utilisation of system.

The CSSS can be found at: <https://www.ccf.customs.gov.au/CPS/cargoProcessingStatus.htm>

### **3 Outages**

In order to maintain a healthy robust system, there is a need to shut down the ICS to apply application or system updates. These shut downs are done on a regular basis to provide a familiar maintenance pattern to Industry Clients.

For application updates the scheduled outage window is 00:00 - 04:00 every Wednesday. Scheduled outages for systems maintenance are quarterly, on Saturdays between 23:00 and 04:00 Sunday. Not all scheduled windows are used for updates, but all are advised to Industry via the Cargo Support Website.