

March 19, 2009

Newport, RI—Assistant Commissioner (Office of Field Operations) Thomas Winkowski addressed nearly 200 members of the New England trade community today at the Coalition of New England Companies for Trade's (CONNECT) 13th Annual Northeast Trade and Transportation Conference in Newport, Rhode Island.

CONNECT is the largest nonprofit member-based international trade organization in the Northeast and serves the interests of New England businesses that depend on international trade. With over 650 corporate and 250 individual memberships, CONNECT is a pro-trade advocacy group that provides continuous industry education on international trade matters and is highly effective in facilitating partnership between private and public sector organizations dealing with international trade policy-making.

AC Winkowski began his remarks noting that CBP just marked its 6th anniversary as an agency within the Department of Homeland Security and is currently in transition to a new commissioner. In the interim, Deputy Commissioner Jayson Ahern is acting commissioner and he continues to move CBP forward to meet mission critical demands.

AC Winkowski then noted that when he became assistant commissioner two years ago, he recognized that trade operations within OFO needed to be reassessed. The Office of International Trade (OT) had just been newly established, and, after some review, he saw the need to change the profile of trade operations—making it more “robust”—within his office. As a result, he established the Trade Operations Division (TOD) within OFO adding additional trade staff and notably improving overall trade operations management. His further goal is for his TOD, working with OT, to continue establishing productive partnerships with the trade community.

While he spoke on a number of topics ranging from the present economic climate, to budgetary challenges, to improving cargo processing transparency, to import safety issues and the Lacey Act, the topic that seemed to be on most people's minds was 10 + 2 or Importer Security Filing. Acknowledging that 10 + 2 poses challenges for both the trade and CBP, he said that CBP will take a “common sense approach” to full implementation scheduled for January 2010 and encouraged trade community members to file any comments on the interim procedures now in place by June 1, 2009.

AC Winkowski also dismissed the rumor that 10 + 2 will somehow become modified or be pushed back from full implementation in January 2010. He said, in fact, that CBP is identifying importers who have yet to file under the interim 10 + 2 requirements and is planning on notifying those importers encouraging them to file now so that they are operationally ready for full implementation next January.

Under the category “oldie, but goodie,” AC Winkowski also remarked that in-bond processing is again under review and improvements are coming. He said there is a lot of work to do in this area and he expects near-future discussions with the trade community on changes that he hopes

will improve the process and accountability, and he expects a Federal Register Notice will be published sometime this summer for trade community comment.