



## The U.S. Coast Guard Joins the ACE/ITDS Global Data Sharing Initiative

On January 24, 2008 the U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard) signed a letter of intent to become the 43<sup>rd</sup> Participating Government Agency (PGA) to join the International Trade Data System (ITDS). This decision will enhance Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) joint planning and operations by the use of the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) as a shared capability. The Coast Guard will be exploring new ways of using information to improve cargo and vessel examinations and inspections, harmonize processes with other agencies, and reduce regulatory burden on industry.

Coast Guard leadership realized the potential value of participating in the ACE/ITDS system. The ACE/ITDS system would give the Coast Guard access to more information on cargo movements, but also access to other agencies' processes and programs as well.

### *The Challenges –*

The Coast Guard and CBP are now planning a joint 2010 pilot demonstration of the ACE M1 capabilities with port partners in Charleston, SC. Short-term challenges include completing the extensive training which Coast Guard personnel will need, and developing new collaborative procedures for implementing the new ACE M1 functionality. The Coast Guard and CBP will be assessing alternatives to separate log-ons for future implementation compatible with the SAFE Port Act-mandated Port Inter-Agency Operations Centers program (“Watchkeeper/Command 21.”)

*The Benefits –* Some of the benefits the Coast Guard envisions it will realize by participating in ACE/ITDS include:

1) An improved hazardous materials inspection process; 2) Improved access to data on vessels, cargo, and related parties; 3) Improved access to data needed to analyze incidents impeding the flow of maritime cargo; 4) Improved processing times in terms of time spent managing containers on hold; and 5) A repository of background information required for maritime applications and port-level information displays to assist in vessel queries.

### *ITDS APPLICATIONS THE COAST GUARD CAN PURSUE*

- **Hazardous materials cargo inspections** – ACE/ITDS can provide detailed information about cargo arrivals the moment it becomes available. This can allow the Coast Guard to analyze targeting criteria based on statistical analysis of port risk or party compliance histories, and plan operations accordingly.
- **Response operations for incidents involving maritime cargo** – ACE/ITDS could improve this process by providing a single source of information for all cargo data, including manifests, stowage plans, international company contact information and technical cargo data. This would allow all agencies to communicate and coordinate using the same information.
- **Inter-agency collaborative planning and operations** – The Coast Guard and CBP are in the process of improving intelligence and law enforcement data sharing about vessels, passengers and cargo of interest. Adding ACE access to the Coast Guard's resources is part of this effort. Increased operational efficiency, improved maritime security, and reduction in unnecessary delays of cargo shipping are the goals.
- **Port operations-controlling cargo operations and container movements** – Multiple agencies have authority to interrupt the normal flow of cargo for a number of reasons. ACE/ITDS could solve this problem by providing a centralized status board of all agencies' activities interrupting cargo flow. This could then be filtered back to a status board showing which agency is holding the container, where it is located, and the point of contact.