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Translation

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Standardised EUROPLOMBs - Guidelines for sealing wagons and intermodal transport units

EUROPLOMB standardisé - Guide pour l'apposition de scellés sur les wagons et les unités de transport intermodales

Standardisierte - EUROPLOMBE - Leitfaden für das Anbringen von Verschlüssen an Güterwagen und intermodalen Transporteinheiten



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Summary

In a liberalised European rail transport market, ongoing efforts are made to accelerate international freight traffic by eliminating to a large extent checks and formalities at the borders.

For this purpose it is essential that consignments are handled in accordance with rules from the moment they are accepted at the handover site (siding, station, port, container terminal, etc.). This includes ensuring that they can be properly identified, i.e. ensuring as per legal requirements that the goods due to be conveyed are unaltered upon receipt. In this respect seals only ensure that tampering during the journey can be identified.

Proper identifiability is a requirement of customs law (transit procedure, export procedure) which is met by affixing seals (sealing packages, sealing the space containing the goods) or providing a description of the goods in accordance with the relevant requirements. Under the simplified transit procedure for rail, railway undertakings (RUs) ensure compliance with the principle of identifiability under customs law as part of their role as carriers.

The present guidelines define the recognised and standardised EUROPLOMBS as the minimum requirement for sealing spaces in which goods are contained for conveyance by rail, and include a checklist for affixing seals on wagons and intermodal transport units. The checklist was prepared due to the variety of types and sealing devices.

1 - Standardised EUROPLOMBS

1.1 - Affixing standardised EUROPLOMBS

1.1.1 - Identifiability

For the purpose of identifiability, covered wagons and loading units shall be secured by means of seals applied by the consignor, the customs authority or the railway undertaking (RU) (see [Glossary - page 16](#)). Seals serve to validate transport documents. They can also have a dissuasive effect against theft of goods, but cannot prevent it. Seals shall have an indicative effect. In the event of whole or partial loss of goods, an intact seal shall serve as prima facie evidence that goods were not stolen from the wagon or loading unit, or equally that unauthorised objects were not placed therein.

However, if the means of conveyance contains goods which are not listed in the consignment note (e.g. untaxed cigarettes) and the seal is intact, then the trail can be safely and reliably traced back to the place of loading.

1.1.2 - Ensuring identifiability in accordance with the implementing provisions of the Customs Code (Customs Code IP)

The implementing regulation of the Customs Code of the European Union stipulates that goods to be transported must be sealed in order to be released under customs control in accordance with the Community customs transit procedure (see [Glossary](#)).

As a *general rule*, covered wagons and intermodal transport units (see [Glossary](#)) shall be identified by affixing a seal ("plomb") to the space containing the goods, provided that:

- the means of transport is recognised as suitable for sealing (see [point B.1 - page 8](#))¹ and
- the seal itself displays the prescribed technical features.

In accordance with the aim of the customs transit procedure, it shall be ensured that the goods being transported from A to B are the same goods for which customs have approved the suspension of duties and tax. No loss of goods shall have occurred and no one shall have been able to access the goods between the moment the seals were affixed in the country of dispatch and the moment of arrival in the destination country.

As a general rule, the customs authorities involved shall concentrate on checking the (manifest) intactness of the seals. There shall be no time-consuming physical check that the goods themselves have not been tampered with.

a. A seal can be dispensed with:

The office of departure (see [Glossary](#)) can dispense with a seal if the goods can be identified by their description in the transit declaration or in accompanying documents or taking into account any other measures to ensure identifiability. The description of goods is considered as suitable for establishing the identity of the goods if it is precise enough to ensure that the nature and quantity of the goods are easily discernible.

1. The "RIV" marker indicates that the means of transport to which it is affixed is suitable for sealing, in the same way as the "TIR" marker when affixed to a road vehicle.

- b. Under the simplified transit procedure for rail, customs shall not attach any customs seals of their own, in view of the measures taken by the railways to ensure identifiability on closed wagons and loading units.

The standardised EUROPLOMBS, as described in [Appendix A - page 6](#), meet the minimum requirements in force for rail traffic and are accepted as railway / consignor seals in the simplified transit procedure for rail. If the consignor or customs authority has affixed seals of superior quality (e.g. those used in maritime transport), no additional EUROPLOMBS are required.

1.2 - Objectives

- Use a standardised seal recognised by customs authorities and RUs,
- Safeguard the simplified transit procedure for rail,
- Ensure seamless acceptance of consignments by all RUs involved in their transport and other carriers,
- Save time, labour and costs across Europe,
- Simplify the verification of evidence in the event of whole or partial loss, thus minimising unnecessary disputes in the event of loss or damage,
- Minimise criminal acts such as acts of terrorism or human trafficking or abuse which could harm individuals, goods or the environment,
- Railway companies shall undertake to explain the features of standardised Europlombs to their customers.

1.3 - Properties

The standardised EUROPLOMB must:

- sustain normal use, i.e. it must be designed in such a way that it cannot be removed or tampered with without special equipment,
- be easy to check and identify,
- be designed in such a way that it cannot be broken, removed or otherwise tampered with without leaving visible traces,
- be manufactured for **single** use only; seals must not be able to be used more than once,
- carry forgery-proof, easy-to-read makers,
- carry an identification marking and a clear individual inspection number,
- be of sufficiently sturdy construction that the seal cannot inadvertently break or be forged or re-used unnoticed,
- be simple and straightforward to attach.

1.4 - Appearance and technical features

[Appendix A - page 6](#) of the present leaflet details the appearance and technical features of the standardised EUROPLOMB.

1.5 - Exceptions

In the event that a standardised EUROPLOMB as described in [Appendix A](#) is not suitable for a particular vehicle or loading unit, the consignor RU shall select and use a suitable seal with the features described in [point 1.3 - page 3](#).