

# ENFORCEMENT OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

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Counterfeiting items protected by intellectual property rights (IPR) is economic theft and a form of commercial fraud. As well as the loss of income to the creators and marketers of genuine goods, the public can be subjected to inferior and hazardous products, the government is deprived of tax revenue, and organized crime may be attracted when IPR infringement is committed.

The unfair competition created by "knockoffs" of sound recordings, video games, motion pictures and business software is well known. More insidious, however, are situations such as the false designation of the strength of industrial fastener bolts used in the construction of buildings, aircraft, bridges and school buses; or a deceptive presentation of the capability of semiconductor microchips which could be used in industrial or hospital equipment.

To combat violation of intellectual property rights Customs has placed increasing emphasis on their protection and made it a priority trade enforcement area. Customs Publication No. 563, "How to Obtain Copyright, Trademark, and Patent Protection From the U.S. Customs Service", is now available to the public at no charge and will be reprinted as soon as the regulations (Title 19, Code of Federal Regulations, part 133, and sections 12.39 and 12.39a) are revised. In addition, Customs maintains a Service-wide IPR "hotline" at 1-800-ITS FAKE; and the IPR branch phone number is 202-482-6960. For assistance in accessing the textual portion of the IPR module on the Customs Electronic Bulletin Board, call 703-440-6236.

In conclusion, whether it's protecting the U.S. Olympics logos, golf club trademarks, or copyrighted materials on CD-ROMs, the U.S. Customs Service remains ever vigilant and forward looking to provide border enforcement protection for intellectual property rights whether they are old and well-established or tomorrow's technology.