

# Supporting Commerce



UNIVERSITY ROW, BRIDGETOWN  
www.barbadosport.com

*"The Port of Bridgetown - It is the first and last impression a ship's crew and passengers will have of Barbados"*

The Bridgetown Port is the major port of entry for approximately 90% of the goods used in the manufacturing and retail sectors in Barbados. A major part of the Port's responsibility has been dedicated to supporting businesses in the import/export trade, a job that it carries out without any government subsidies, unlike the majority of Ports around the Caribbean.

## Major Agencies in Clearing Cargo

Traders doing business in the seaport have to interface with a number of entities, the primary being Customs. Customs examines cargo, determining the value of goods for assessing duties which most times include: environmental levy, VAT and fixed taxes that are part of an overall national revenue policy. Despite recent computerisation of the customs documentation process, analysis and investigation by the officials can take time, a process that can be expedited if the information is submitted in a timely and accurate manner by the shippers, shipping agents, brokers, consolidators and hauliers.



Straddle carrier loads container on a truck at the Bridgetown Port

Agriculture is another critical area of interface for shippers. With the multitude of diseases, insects and other pests that could wipe out our fragile agricultural sector for example, the authorities from the Ministry of Agriculture operating within the Port are thorough in their examination of materials that may attract such risks.

Similar assessments are made by the Health Authorities, who also have to follow certain international and local regulations before goods can be given the necessary licenses, permits or other clearances. Some of these steps are mandatory even before the shipments reach the Bridgetown Port.

These three entities, independent of Barbados Port Inc, work separately but simultaneously or sequentially at times, depending on the activity to facilitate the movement of cargo through the seaport.

In moving forward, the Barbados Port Inc supports fuller integration of the Information Systems among all agencies to make the process simpler and will be part of the upcoming 'Competitiveness Project' to which the Government has given priority, in an effort to make Barbados more efficient.

## Commitment to Commerce

The Barbados Port Inc's charges for receiving, storing and delivering cargo, known locally as FAS (Free Alongside Ship) charges, were moved from \$760 in

1987, downwards to the current \$706.40 plus VAT per 20ft container in the 1990s, in support of local shippers because of the rising cost of doing business.

Other measures to facilitate shippers include:

- Working 24 hours a day seven days per week, to service any vessel that calls.
- Typically servicing 6-8 cargo vessels each week, most times receiving as many as 700 full containers per week.
- Delivering approximately 100 containers per day through the gates, and receiving approximately the same amount for shipment, full and empty.
- The ability for shipping agents to daily monitor the movement of cargo through electronic reports on the activities of containers.

The low preferential port tariff for locally produced goods, Bds. \$45 per TEU, reduced from Bds\$550 in the mid-1990's, is but another area in which the Barbados Port Inc has given support to the development of the local manufacturing sector.

## Working with Stakeholders

Ever cognizant of the needs of its stakeholders, the Barbados Port Inc continues to express its willingness to open the cargo gates for delivery after 4pm, but with the clear understanding that consignees would be in a position to accept these deliveries. Discussions are also taking place on the possible extension of delivery hours to 7:00pm daily.

In a recent stakeholder meeting with the Barbados Chamber of Commerce, Barbados Port Inc agreed to the Chamber's request to reduce the current eight storage days to five on a tiered basis. This will be implemented at a rate of one free storage day annually over a three-year period, commencing October 1, 2009.

The Barbados Port Inc continues to upgrade its systems that are already comparable to others in the region, to secure and maintain its competitive advantage in maritime trade to the benefit of all its stakeholders.