

Authorised Economic Operator Manual – Transported Asset Protection Association (TAPA)

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1. What is TAPA?

TAPA is an association of security professionals and related business partners, shippers (i.e. manufacturers and distributors) and logistic service providers (freight forwarders, hauliers, airlines, ground handlers, insurance companies, and others involved in the movement of goods) who have come together to address supply chain security threats that are prevalent in the high tech industry and high value consumer product sector.

TAPA has its origins in the USA but has extended to cover Europe via TAPA-EMEA (Europe, Middle East, and Africa) as well as Asia/Pacific (TAPA ASIA).

2. Types of standard

There are three standards issued by TAPA:

- Freight Security Requirements (FSR);
- Truck Security Standards (TSR); and,
- Parking Security Standards (PSR).

FSR and TSR are fully in use as at January 2008. A fourth standard - airline/ground handler standard - is currently under development in conjunction with IATA. FSR is the only standard currently relevant to AEO safety and security criteria.

3. Compatibility between TAPA FSR standard and AEO safety & security criteria

A comparison has been conducted between the TAPA FSR standard & the AEO safety & security criteria laid out in the EU Commission's AEO Guidelines.

This shows there is a close, but not complete, match between the requirements. TAPA is concerned primarily with the security – theft and losses – of goods in the supply chain. It is predominantly applied by logistics service providers, often at the request of manufacturers and distributors.

4. Types of certification and assessment of the TAPA FSR standard

Within FSR, there are three categories of certification on a scale of A-C (A being the highest). A&B certifications may be granted only by independent auditors who carry out a site audit in every case. Category C is based on self-assessment and involves no independent audit activity to verify the standard. Visiting officers should check the type of certificate held by the applicant, as this will influence the level of confidence in the accreditation.

The independent audits carried out for type A and B certificates are conducted by experts within select auditing organisations. In fact these organisations are largely the same that conduct audits of ISO standards.

5. Scope of TAPA certification

TAPA certificates are specific to a particular facility and may not cover all the international trade activities of an economic operator. Therefore, a multi-site business, with sites in several Member States (or within a single Member State) may have some sites that are not covered by a TAPA certificate. Visiting officers should ensure that any TAPA certificate/audit report produced is relevant to the legal entity covered by the AEO application and their international trade activities fall within the scope of the TAPA certification.

6. Period of validity of a TAPA certificate

TAPA certificates are valid for 24 months and must be reviewed (including a further audit) and renewed after this period expires. In addition there is a requirement for a self-assessment after 12 months. This ensures the standard and the holder's compliance with that standard is kept up to date.

7. Use of the TAPA FSR certification in the AEO application process

Where the AEO applicant refers to a TAPA FSR certificate the visiting officer should ask for a copy of the certificate to check the type of certificate held, its scope, and that it is still valid. The visiting officer should also ask the applicant to produce the most recent TAPA audit report. If the applicant wishes to obtain AEO status, they should be willing to co-operate in producing this evidence. Where a report cannot be produced, the TAPA certification should be discounted in assessing the AEO criteria. The report can then be used in a similar manner to ISO standards and ISO audit reports in assessing the applicant's ability to meet the AEO safety and security criteria. The report can be used, together with other information held about the applicant, to determine what further checks are needed to ensure the AEO criteria are met.

Having TAPA FSR certification therefore does not automatically mean that all specific AEO criteria are met. However, it does provide a greater level of confidence that the applicant gives safety and security standards a high priority and is able to conform to the AEO safety and security criteria.

This approach to the use of TAPA FSR certification in the AEO process is consistent with the approach adopted by the US Border Agency when they assess applications for CT-PAT status.