International Cruise (Sea) Passenger Fee

Last Modified:

The AQI program inspects international cruise vessels and their passengers arriving from outside the customs territory of the United States.

User fee regulations (7 CFR 354.3(a)) define a passenger as: “A natural person for whom transportation is provided, including infants, whether a separate ticket or travel document is issued for the infant, or the infant or toddler occupies a seat, or the infant or toddler is held or carried by another passenger.” International cruise passenger fee regulations are listed in 7 CFR 354.3(f).

The Cost and What It Covers

The current international cruise passenger fee is **$1.34** (7 CFR 354.3(f)). This fee will be adjusted on October 1st of each year through Fiscal Year 2028 as specified in the AQI User Fees table. This fee covers the direct and indirect costs to inspect international cruise vessels and their passengers, including:

- Analyzing incoming passengers before arrival
- Inspecting or preclearing passengers for agricultural products

- Inspecting passenger baggage using U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agriculture canines and specialized nonintrusive inspection equipment
- Inspecting the ship to ensure it is free of contaminants, prohibited articles, or invasive pests
- Inspecting the ship's stores to ensure there are no prohibited items or that any prohibited items are properly safeguarded
- Monitoring the storage and removal of the ship's regulated international garbage to ensure compliance with all regulatory requirements

Exemptions

Some categories of passengers are exempt from paying an AQI user fee (see 7 CFR 354.3(f)(2)).

Limitation on Charges

Cruise lines will not be charged reimbursable overtime for passenger inspection services required for any cruise ship on which a passenger arrived who has paid the international passenger AQI user fee for that cruise (see 7 CFR 354.3(f)(8)).

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Paying the Fee

The ticket or travel document issuer is responsible for collecting and remitting the appropriate international cruise passenger user fees as described in 7 CFR 354.3(f). APHIS provides a Remittance Worksheet (548.94 KB)to assist with this process. International cruise passenger fees are due within 90 days after the end of each calendar month as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: International Cruise Passenger Fee Remittance Schedule

Month of Collection	Reconciliation Period	Due Date
January	February – April	April 30
February	March – May	May 31
March	April – June	June 30
April	May – July	July 31
May	June – August	August 31

Month of Collection	Reconciliation Period	Due Date
June	July – September	September 30
July	August – October	October 31
August	September – November	November 30
September	October – December	December 31
October	November – January	January 31
November	December – February	February 28
December	January – March	March 31

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How To Set Up a Payment Account

To set up a payment account with APHIS' Financial Management Division (FMD), send a completed New Account Packet – Cruise Lines to the location indicated on the worksheet.

Companies need a separate APHIS account for each user fee type, such as international air passenger, treatment monitoring, reimbursable overtime, and other types.

AQI User Fee Tax Implications

AQI User fees may fall primarily into two business deduction categories: cost of goods sold and operational expenses. While entities should consult a licensed, certified or otherwise credentialed tax professional on appropriate treatment, the AQI user fee program created the following informational guide to inform stakeholders: *Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection User Fees - Effects on Taxable Corporate Income* (227.04 KB).

Refunds Associated with Unused Tickets

As specified in 7 CFR 354.3(f)(5)(v), user fees collected in conjunction with unused tickets or travel documents shall be netted against the next remittance. Remitters must submit a revised written statement indicating the revised number of passengers and international passenger AQI user fees amount collected. The revised

written statement must be completed and filed for each month during which the ticket or travel document-issuing entity certifies that there was a decrease in the number of passengers and international passenger AQI user fees collected. An Account Credit Request Worksheet (44.25 KB) is available to help with this process.

Compliance

APHIS and CBP conduct periodic audits to determine compliance. As specified in 7 CFR 354.3(f)(7), each carrier, travel agent, U.S.-based tour wholesaler, or other entity must advise USDA, APHIS, FMD of the name, address, and telephone number of a responsible officer who is authorized to verify AQI user fee calculations, payments, and remittance, as well as any changes in the identifying information submitted. The responsible person for a payment remains the responsible person until the carrier, travel agent, tour wholesaler, or other party issuing a ticket or travel document notifies APHIS of a transfer of responsibility.

Recordkeeping and Record Retention

AQI user fee records retention requirements are outlined in 7 CFR 354.3(j). Entities responsible for paying AQI user fees and their agents must maintain sufficient documentation for APHIS, CBP, and representatives to verify the accuracy of fee collections. This documentation must be maintained in the United States for a period of 5 years from the date of remittance calculation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can companies remit payments more frequently than specified in the remittance schedule (Table 1)?

While the regulations do not prohibit more frequent payment, remitting payments monthly, as outlined in Table 1, minimizes administrative costs, stabilizes cash flows, and allows time to reconcile payments. We discourage payments any more frequently than monthly.

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