

# ICPA Trade Compliance Tech tip # COVID-19 - 001

## Q: How to get those pesky Customs forms filled out and back when you do not have a scanner in your home office?

To reply to a CF-28, or CF-29 or when entry documents are required, you have to upload them into ACE or send them to your broker for similar treatment. Uploads are generally done in PDF format in order to ensure consistency and minimal chance of details changing between the send and CBP. Here are a couple of tips on doing this from your desktop so that you do not have to go into your office to use a scanner during the pandemic.

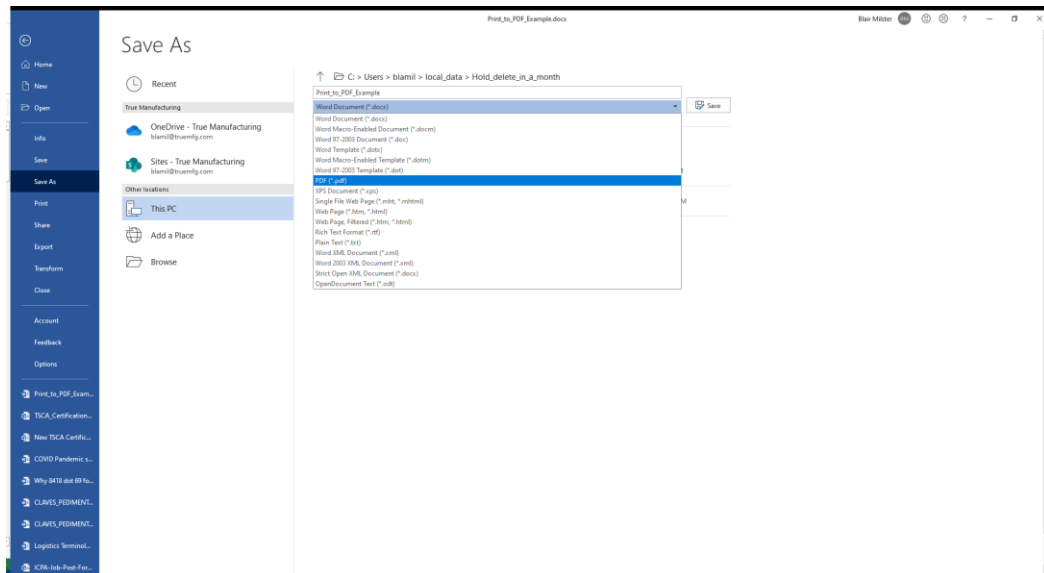
For your written replies and letters, you are probably already doing them in MS Word.

You may not be aware of this, however you can put those into PDF two different ways.

In the current and last two version of MS Word, the user was given the option to save or print to PDF along with saving it as a word file.

Saving as PDF is most useful as Word also saves the text content as part of the file meta data. This means that when it is stored on a network drive or on your computer, it can be found quickly found again years later based on the file name or on the contents metadata. In recent years, the Microsoft Active Directory system and indexing file names and contents have been a gift from the gods for the compliance professional looking to be able to index and find records both due to need and due to need to dispose of. That option is what I use.

Here is a screen shot of save to PDF.

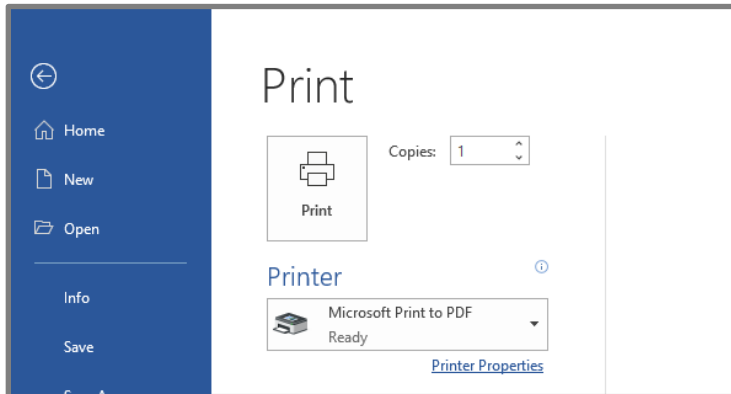


For printing to PDF, you go to print and then instead of printing to a printer you select the print to PDF option that is included with almost all versions of word sold in recent years.

Here is a screen shot of printing to PDF.

This is a two step process.

First change your printer to print to PDF like. After you do so, it will look like this:



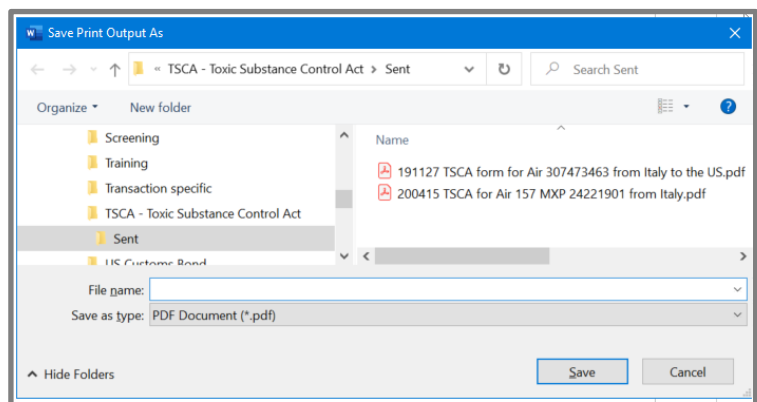
Then when you click print, it will ask you where to save it and how to name it, like this:

Pick where you want to save.

Add a file name.

Click save.

Now you can show the kids in the office  
how it is done!



Ok, ok, what about when I get those pesky forms and I need to add signatures and detail?

Well, that is more fun, however it can be done from your home and w/o you having to go out and risk infection so your tons of imported gizmos are released on time. Here is how.

To add text to a form that did not come to you as a PDF form that is made to be filled out, you actually have several options. The easiest is going to be to use a text box.

Please take a look at the top of your PDF viewer. That is the program that opens up when you open a file with .PDF extension and you are not in a web page. The guys at Adobe have been doing some nifty things with the software. Unfortunately, they are not so good at telling everyone about them. One of those that the import compliance professional will love is the ability to markup and stamp documents.

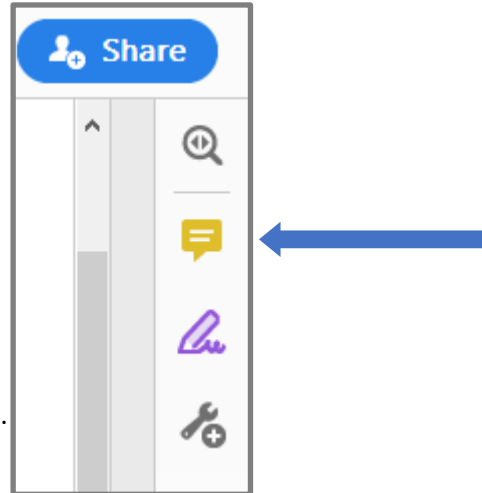
To respond to a Customs form that is not in a PDF form made to be typed into already, you need to use the "comments tools" on your PDF viewer.

To use the comments tools for with the PDF viewer, please look for the crayons and wrenches.

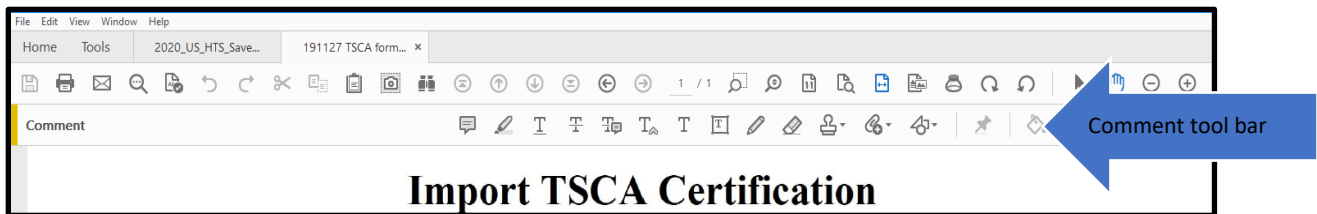
They are usually on the far right side and look like this:

You are looking for the little yellow balloon that looks like a cartoon speech bubble.

After you have used MS Word to do your writeup and explanation of how the errors noted are really the result of exuberance and not intent to do wrong, you then open the PDF file that you received and click there.



That opens the tools options for you. Please find that yellow comment bubble again and click to open. That will open the comment tool bar for you. It will look like this:



From there, you are saying “I need to put in a lot of text, not just a comment”

Nobody ever told the comment text box how much it can do or not do. In fact, I think they kept it quiet so that they did not have to do a pay raise. Myself, I generally break my write up down to 2 paragraph groups. That seems to work well with out losing data. Your mileage may vary, so plan to test this a few times before you must do it in a hurry.

Here is how you put the comment text box to work for you.

First click on the icon. It looks like this.



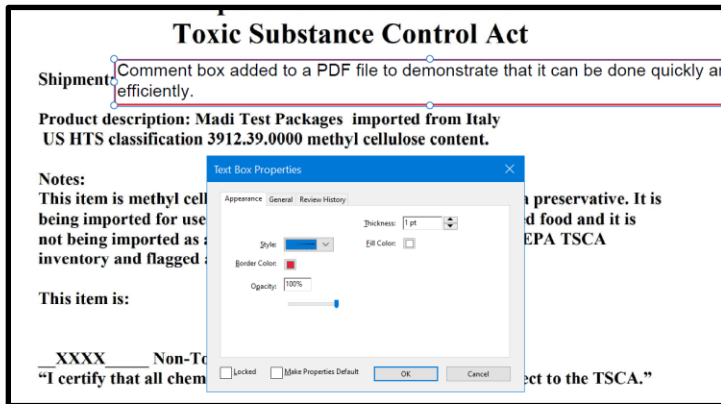
Then click on a space inside of the PDF and type a little. You can also just hit to space bar and then paste. It will then look like this:



At this point, you may be thinking, Great, there are options here, but I do not want to send US Customs anything with red borders on my replies.

That is where formatting comes in to play.

Right click on the text box and a small menu comes up. That menu gives you the option to change the properties of the text box. Click on properties and:



You now have the choice of styles for the border and can make it appear just about how ever you want to.

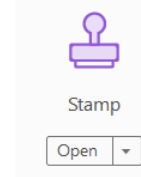
Turn the border color to white so that it matches the background, and you are in business.



Moving forward, your last two things are going to be: Make sure it prints to PDF right and adding a signature.


For the signature, you want to go back to your comment options and find the stamp and click on it.

Hold that thought. You are going to first need a signature to use in that stamp.



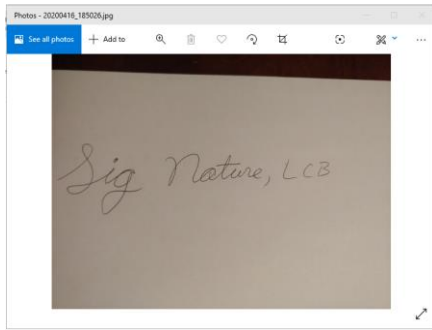
You will want a sheet of plain white paper.

I like to use a sharpie and sign big then shrink down when I import.

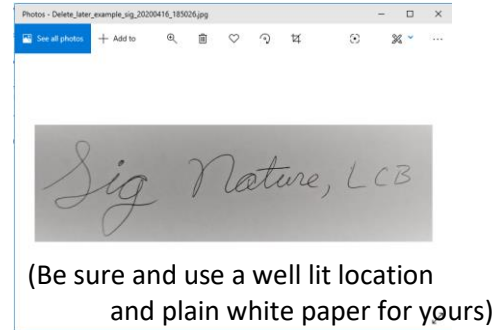
A regular ink signature works also. Take a picture of the signature and email it to yourself. Open the file. Then use the MS photo view open to edit it option. Now use the crop buttons at the top to trim it to just your writing. The crop buttons look like :  and let you cut out the wasted space from your signature. ( Note that this one was done

in bad light. It is for demonstration only. ( see next page please )

Before cropping:



After cropping



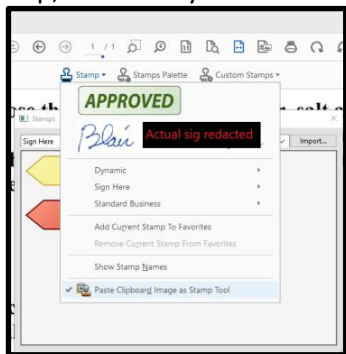
Save the cropped picture to some place you can find it. Again, it will need to be saved to PDF.

Please return to your PDF file with the markups and text box comments.

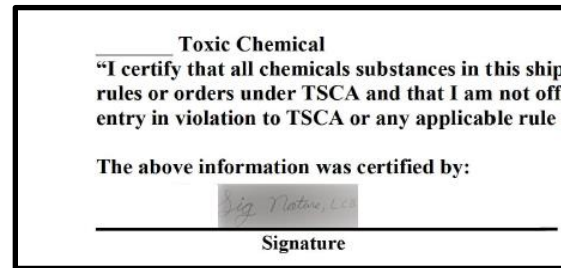
After you click on the stamp icon, you have the choice. If you are going to do this several time, you want to click on Custom Stamps and import it.

If you do not expect to do this all that often, then open your favorite snipping tool, take a snip of it and the click on stamp and use the option the to Paste Clipboard Image as stamp.

That will let you paste your signature as a stamp, wherever you want it.



The result then looks like:



Again, if you put the signature on a white background, you will have a seamless presentation of a digitally signed document.

The last item to remember is that before you send the modified and commented PDF out, you must print it to PDF again. The next user probably will not have "show comments" checked in their settings. Unless they looked, it would look like you sent back the blank form. Don't bet on CBP doing that. **You have to print this one to PDF to be sure they see the comments and layouts as you intend.** You now have a PDF of your response that is digitally signed and ready to go.

One last item: The stamp function works great with company stamps in blue ink. Once you get practiced at using this method, your documents move much faster. Time saved!  
I hope this is a help and Good luck,