



How to Obtain a Port Entry Permits & Licenses in Nigeria (2026 Guide)

Description

Introduction

Nigeria's seaports handle **over 80% of the country's international trade**, making them critical to commerce, logistics, and investment. Whether you are a freight forwarder, shipping company, contractor, or investor, access to the port is tightly regulated. To enter the port, whether as a staff, contractor, vehicle operator, or vessel, you must secure the appropriate **Port Entry Permit or License**.

This article provides a **complete, step-by-step guide** on *how to obtain a Port Entry Permits & Licenses in Nigeria*. We will cover the types of passes, requirements, official fees, application process, common mistakes, FAQs, and practical checklists. All information here is obtained directly from the **Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA)**, the **Nigerian Maritime Administration & Safety Agency (NIMASA)**, and the official **Port Process Manual**.

If you are serious about avoiding delays, fines, and unauthorised entry issues, read on.

Understanding Port Entry Permits in Nigeria

There are **two broad categories** of port entry permits in Nigeria:

1. Port Access Passes (People & Vehicles):

- Temporary and Permanent Port Passes for personnel
- Vehicle Entry Permits (VEP)
- Issued and managed by the **Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA)** and terminal concessionaires

2. Vessel Entry Permits (Ship Entry Notices - SEN/E-SEN):

- Mandatory clearance for vessels calling at Nigerian ports
- Managed by **NPA (Harbour/Port Control)**, with vessel certificates enforced by **NIMASA**

In addition, **private operators** seeking to run terminals, jetties, or port facilities must obtain specific NPA permits and licenses.

Section A: Port Access Passes for People, Staff, Contractors & Vehicles

Types of Passes

Pass Type	Validity	Typical Cost (NPA Tariff)	Notes
Temporary Port Pass (personnel)	Short-term (visitor/contractor)	₦2,000	For one-off access
Permanent Port Pass	1 year	₦5,000 - ₦5,750	For staff/frequent operators

Pass Type	Validity	Typical Cost (NPA Tariff)	Notes
Vehicle Entry Permit (VEP)	Per vehicle	₦500 - ₦575	Required for every vehicle
Documentation Fee	Per document	₦700 - ₦805	Charged for certain applications
Lost ID Replacement	On demand	≈ ₦500 - ₦575	Charged when replacing passes

Note: Private terminal operators (e.g., APMT, TICT) may impose additional terminal-specific fees for safety training, badges, or stickers.

Requirements for a Port Pass

- Application letter on company letterhead addressed to Port Manager/NPA Security
- Proof of company registration (CAC Certificate)
- Valid government ID (passport, NIN, driver's license)
- Passport photographs
- CRFFN card (for freight forwarders)
- Work permit/visa (for expatriates)
- Safety training or induction certificate (if contractor)
- Payment receipt (RRR or official invoice)

Step-by-Step Application Process

1. **Prepare Documentation**

Gather all documents listed above.

2. **Submit Application**

File at the Port Manager's Office, NPA Security/Permit Unit, or via online submission if available.

3. **Pay Required Fees**

Generate a Remita Retrieval Reference (RRR) or pay directly at the Tariff & Billing Department. Attach receipt to your application.

4. **Verification & Approval**

NPA Security reviews your application, verifies ID, and approves pass issuance.

5. **Collect Your Pass**

Approved passes are issued as physical cards, stickers, or printed permits.

6. **Use at Port Gates**

Present the pass, ID, and vehicle papers (for VEP) at the port gates.

7. **Renewal/Replacement**

Permanent passes expire yearly and must be renewed. Lost passes attract replacement charges.

Common Delays & Penalties

- **Incomplete documentation** → delays in approval
- **Expired work permits/visas** → denial for expatriates
- **Unauthorised entry without pass** → fine of **₦10,000** per incident (per NPA tariff)

Section B: Vessel Entry (Ship Entry Notice - SEN/E-SEN)

What It Is

Every vessel must file a **Ship Entry Notice (SEN)** or its electronic version (E-SEN) before entering a Nigerian port. This allows the NPA Harbour Master to schedule berths, assign pilotage, and coordinate inspections.

Required Vessel Documents

- Certificate of Registry (Nigerian or provisional if applicable)
- IOPP Certificate (International Oil Pollution Prevention)
- SOPEP Manual (Shipboard Oil Pollution Emergency Plan)
- Crew list and seafarer documents
- Cargo manifest and stowage plan
- Proof of valid insurance and seaworthiness (NIMASA compliance)

Vessel Entry Process

1. Pre-Arrival Preparation

Ensure all statutory vessel documents are valid.

2. Submit SEN/E-SEN

Shipping agent submits electronically or at port control. Include ETA, vessel details,

cargo type, and agent contact.

3. Pay Ship Dues & Pilotage

All charges must be settled before clearance.

4. Arrival Inspection

On arrival, the vessel is jointly inspected by NPA, Customs, Immigration, NDLEA, SON, NAFDAC, DSS, etc.

5. Berth Allocation & Operations

Once cleared, the Harbour Master allocates berth and cargo operations may begin.

Timeline & Tips

- Submit SEN at least several days before ETA
- Use a local shipping agent for smooth processing
- Check if your port has automated E-SEN to reduce delays

Section C: Private Jetty & Port Facility Licensing

For investors planning to **develop or operate a private jetty/terminal**, the NPA requires:

1. Application in prescribed forms (6 copies)
2. Technical drawings and environmental impact assessments
3. Proof of corporate registration

4. Security clearance and safety certifications
5. Annual renewal of licenses and payment of prescribed fees

This process is lengthy and requires close engagement with NPA's Engineering and Marine Departments.

Section D: Practical Checklists

Personnel Temporary Port Pass Checklist

Company application letter (on letterhead)
Passport photos + valid ID
CAC certificate
CRFFN card (if applicable)
Work permit/visa (expatriates)
RRR payment receipt
Terminal safety certificate (if contractor)

Vessel Ship Entry Notice Checklist

Vessel particulars (name, IMO, GRT, ETA)
Certificate of Registry
IOPP & SOPEP certificates
Cargo manifest & stowage plan
Crew list
Payment for pilotage and ship dues

Section E: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1. Do I still need an NPA Port Pass if I have a CRFFN Card?

Yes. The NPA pass is mandatory. CRFFN card is only a professional credential.

Q2. How long does it take to get a permanent port pass?

With complete documents, processing may take a few days, but delays are common if requirements are incomplete.

Q3. What happens if I enter without a pass?

Unauthorised entry attracts a **₦10,000 fine** and denial of access.

Q4. Are fees the same across all ports?

Yes, NPA publishes uniform tariffs, but terminal operators may charge extra fees.

Q5. Who inspects cargo at Nigerian ports?

Multiple agencies including Customs, NPA, NDLEA, NAFDAC, SON, NAQS, Police, and DSS.

Section F: Common Misconceptions

"CRFFN card alone grants port access."

You still need an NPA pass.

"Only terminal fees apply, NPA doesn't charge for passes."

NPA tariffs clearly cover port passes and VEP.

"Captains can call Harbour Master directly to berth."

Ship Entry Notice filing is legally required. No shortcuts.

Section G: Investor & Operator Tips

- Always use a registered shipping agent for vessel documentation
 - Apply early to avoid delays with SEN or pass renewals
 - Budget for both NPA and terminal-specific fees
 - Maintain good compliance to avoid fines or denial of entry
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Conclusion

Obtaining a **Port Entry Permit or License in Nigeria** may seem complex, but with the right documentation and timely applications, the process is straightforward. The Nigerian Ports Authority and NIMASA are tightening regulations, rolling out electronic systems, and enforcing compliance to enhance maritime security and efficiency.

Whether you are an **investor developing a terminal**, a **freight forwarder handling cargo**, or a **shipping company calling Nigerian ports**, understanding and following the official requirements will save you time, money, and potential penalties.

By following the clear steps outlined in this guide, you will be equipped to navigate Nigeria's port entry processes successfully.

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