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TTB Updates FAQ for Federal Alcohol Label and Formula Filings

The revised guidance explains how companies submit applications, request amendments and track reviews through the agency’s online portal.

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The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau has updated the FAQ page for its COLAs and Formulas Online system, giving alcohol beverage companies a clearer outline of how to file federal label and formula applications, manage existing submissions, and track reviews through the agency’s online portal.

The change appeared on the agency’s website Thursday and centers on a practical part of alcohol regulation in the United States: the approval process for labels and, in some cases, product formulas. In the FAQ, TTB explains that a COLA, or Certificate of Label Approval, is the document the agency issues to approve an alcohol beverage label for use in the United States. The bureau says the approval is intended to ensure compliance with federal rules covering containers and labeling.

The page also explains the separate role of formulas. According to TTB, a formula is a detailed description of the production process and recipe for a distilled spirits product. The bureau says formula approval must be obtained before that product can be produced or imported. That distinction matters because many companies deal with both processes, but not always for the same products, and the agency’s guidance separates the two steps more clearly.

TTB says applications for both COLAs and formulas can be filed through the COLAs and Formulas Online system. The FAQ describes the portal as the main route for starting new filings and handling existing ones. To begin using COLAs Online, the bureau says an applicant must create an account and log in. Once inside the system, users can start new applications or manage records that are already in process.

For COLA submissions, the FAQ says applicants must complete the online form, upload label information or images, pay any required fee listed for the filing, and then submit the application for TTB review. For formula filings, the bureau says applicants must complete the formula form, provide product details and production information, and submit the material through the same online system. The page also tells users that they can check the status of a COLA application at any time by signing into their account and viewing the application dashboard.

The FAQ addresses changes after an application has already been filed. TTB says amendments to an existing COLA or formula can be requested through the online system by submitting details of the changes to be made. The page also says fees are associated with COLA or formula applications and that the amount varies depending on the type of application and product.

Although the update is administrative, it has direct implications for producers, importers, and compliance teams across the beverage business. Clearer instructions on account access, filing steps, amendments, and status checks can help reduce friction in the approval process, especially for wineries and wine importers that rely on timely label approvals before products can enter the U.S. market. The same applies to spirits companies that need formula approval before production or importation can move forward. In practice, even small procedural questions can affect launch calendars, shipments, and regulatory compliance.

The posting is also notable because label and formula approvals often sit at the center of product planning. A company introducing a new wine, revising a label, or importing a new spirits product may need to coordinate artwork, packaging, customs timing, and federal review at the same time. By putting common questions in one place, TTB appears to be trying to make the online filing process easier to navigate for companies that may be handling multiple products and deadlines at once.

TTB says businesses seeking additional help can consult the agency’s website or contact the bureau directly for technical assistance and specific questions related to online submissions.