

Port Moves a Record 8.1 Million TEUs in 2020

Busiest month, most active quarter also achieved in December

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Essential workers at the Port of Long Beach moved more than 8.1 million cargo container units in 2020, setting a record in the face of economic uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing trade war with China.

The Port ended 2020, its busiest year on record, with 8,113,315 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) moved, an increase of 6.3% from 2019. Imports rose 6.4% to 3,998,340 TEUs. Exports totaled 1,475,888 TEUs, up 0.2%, while empty containers increased 9.9% to 2,639,088 TEUs. The Port exceeded the previous annual record set in 2018 by 22,292 TEUs.



"I want to thank our frontline workers on the docks who kept cargo moving during this unprecedented moment in history, ensuring the safe, secure and timely delivery of vital medical equipment and consumer goods," said Mario Cordero, Executive Director of the Port of Long Beach. "We have all endured incredible hardships with COVID-19, but I am looking forward to 2021 as a time of economic recovery and a renewed focus on our industry partners, infrastructure projects and community stakeholders."

"This record demonstrates the effort of our dockworkers and the Port's determination to collaborate with our partners to overcome the devastating economic challenges presented by COVID-19 and the trade war with China," said Long Beach Harbor Commission President Frank Colonna. "We look forward to continuing to work toward economic recovery along with our stakeholders."

The COVID-19 pandemic drove down consumer demand for goods during the first half of 2020, leading to a 6.9% decline in cargo compared to the same period a year earlier. The San Pedro Bay ports complex – Long Beach and L.A. combined – had 104 canceled sailings in the first half of 2020, 37 of which were destined for Long Beach. That was up from 41 canceled sailings for both ports in the first half of 2019.

It was a different story for the second half of 2020, when preliminary estimates show that the Port had 104 unscheduled container ship calls that made up for voyages canceled earlier in the year, more than quadrupling the unscheduled sailings reported during the same period in 2019.

Demand rose for medical equipment, along with home improvement items, exercise equipment and office furniture as consumers endured shelter-in-place orders and worked from home during the COVID-19 epidemic. The surge in cargo continued through the final months of 2020 as retailers stocked their shelves for the holiday shopping season.

Along with capping 2020 as its all-time busiest year, the Port accomplished two additional records in December by achieving the busiest month and the most active quarter in its 110-year history.

The Port processed 2,406,010 TEUs from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, a 23% increase from the fourth quarter of 2019. It also topped the previous record set during the third quarter of 2020 by 131,740 TEUs.

Trade was up 22.6% in December compared to the same period in 2019. Dockworkers and terminal operators moved 815,885 cargo container units in December and broke the “best month” record set in October 2020 by 9,282 TEUs.

Imports grew 25.6% last month to 406,072 TEUs compared to December 2019 and exports increased 5.6% to 132,374 TEUs. Empty containers headed back overseas jumped 26.3% to 263,852 TEUs.

For complete cargo numbers, visit polb.com/statistics.

To learn more about the Port’s record-setting year, please watch the 2021 State of the Port, which will be held this year as a virtual program at 9 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 4, at www.polb.com/stateoftheport.

The Port of Long Beach is one of the world’s premier seaports, a gateway for trans-Pacific trade and a trailblazer in goods movement and environmental stewardship. With 175 shipping lines connecting Long Beach to 217 seaports, the Port handles \$170 billion in trade annually, supporting more than 575,000 Southern California jobs.

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