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Truck turn times escalate in LA-Long Beach, HTA reports

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Truck turn times at the Los Angeles-Long Beach port complex have increased more than 30 percent since last year, according to statistics provided by the Harbor Trucking Association to JOC.com, a result of crisis-level congestion.

Carriers and terminals have been battling congestion in Los Angeles and Long Beach all year, but conditions worsened in the peak-season months. In August, the average truck visit was 89 minutes, but turn times jumped to 98 minutes in September and new HTA data show waits even longer in October, averaging 101 minutes. Nearly 31 percent of all container moves are taking more than two hours, compared with 23.8 percent in August.

| Average Truck Visit Time in LA-LB Complex | | | |
|--|--------|-----------|---------|
| Terminal Name | August | September | October |
| APM | 74 | 68 | 88 |
| CUT West | 82 | 92 | 79 |
| ITS | 83 | 84 | 86 |
| LBCT | 75 | 80 | 99 |
| Matson | 37 | 39 | 44 |
| PCT | 78 | 100 | 96 |
| Pier 400 | 109 | 122 | 114 |
| Pier A | 88 | 95 | 102 |
| STS | 81 | 115 | 114 |
| Trapac | 78 | 81 | 63 |
| TTI | 108 | 98 | 117 |
| WBCT | 86 | 112 | 100 |
| YTI | 112 | 129 | 134 |
| Average | 89 | 98 | 101 |
| Percent Over 2 Hours | 23.8% | 28.3% | 30.8% |
| <i>Source: Harbor Trucking Association</i> | | | |

Seven of the 13 terminals had wait times grow from September to October.

Data from the HTA show the longest turn times are at the Yusen Container Terminal; in October, the average visit to YTI in Los Angeles topped 134 minutes.

Los Angeles' Pier 400, operated by APM Terminals, Evergreen's Los Angeles STS terminal and Long Beach's TTI terminal were among other terminals with long turn times. TTI had the second-longest turn times at the LA-Long Beach port complex in October — 117 minutes, nearly 20 minutes longer than they were in September. Pier 400's average visit time dropped from 122 minutes in September to 114 minutes in October. The STS terminal also registered an average visit time of 114 minutes in October, down from 115 minutes in September.

Matson's terminal in Long Beach boasted the shortest truck visits at 44 minutes, though the turn times still averaged five minutes longer than in September. No other terminals had turn-times of less than one hour, but TraPac was close. TraPac's Los Angeles terminal, which reportedly was affected by [some hard-timing tactics](#) from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union this summer because of its landmark automation project, lowered its average truck visit from 81 minutes in September to 63 minutes in October.

Slideshow: 12 reasons for LA-LB congestion

The HTA announced on Oct. 20 that it would [explore the possibility](#) of filing a class-action lawsuit against terminal operators in Los Angeles, Long Beach and Oakland because of initiatives taken by the terminals that hurt drayage truckers' bottom lines. For example, HTA Executive Director Alex Cherin told JOC.com that terminals are no longer taking empty containers, but are charging a per diem when truckers don't return chassis. Truckers have nowhere to put empties, and therefore can't return chassis, creating a virtual catch-22 with truckers on the losing end.

The HTA said it met with harbor commissioners at both ports in January, showing data indicating the average visit exceeded one hour, with nearly 20 percent of all visits taking more than two hours. The HTA said its data, and subsequent suggestions, were swept under the table.

Since that meeting, average visit times have increased. The average turn time grew to 70 minutes in January, declined in February and March, then jumped to 78 minutes in April and 81 minutes in May. The average visit time was 89 minutes in June, July and August.

Trucking companies say many marine terminals, without little or prior notice, are refusing to accept empty equipment, they are restricting the time for storing export loads, and they are closing sections of their facilities to truck traffic.

This is causing a surge in late charges for the return of containers and chassis, and leaves trucking companies liable for demurrage if they don't retrieve boxes within a certain number of "free days" after containers are unloaded from a ship.

Demurrage is assessed against the cargo, but shippers often blame truckers for failing to pick up containers on time. When that happens, truckers may be stuck with the bills, which can mount quickly.

Truckers say they receive regular bulletins advising that a section of the terminal has been shut in order to clear backlogs. If a container's free time expires that day, the trucker is billed anyway.

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