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Petroleum Coke Moved From Open Piles, Meeting State Deadline

More than 35,000 metric tons of petroleum coke was loaded aboard two ships this week from open storage piles, marking the last time that coke will be stored openly at the Port of Long Beach.

With the shipments, the port met a state-imposed Jan. 1, 2001, deadline to eliminate the last of its open coke storage facilities. California Gov. Gray Davis signed a bill introduced by Assemblyman Alan Lowenthal of Long Beach in September that moved up by a year the South Coast Air Quality Management District's deadline for enclosing the port's coke storage facilities.

"We want to thank our tenants for working with us to meet the deadline," said Long Beach Harbor Commission President John Kashiwabara. "We want to be good neighbors, so we are committed to minimizing the coke dust coming from the port."

Petroleum coke, a byproduct of the crude oil refining process that is used in power plants and in steel making, is the leading commodity shipped through the port. Last year, 3.5 million tons was shipped through Long Beach.

Applied Industrial Materials Corp. (AIMCOR), the port leading coke exporter and the world's leading supplier of coke, has been shipping some of its coke from two open storage pads on Pier G. The port has negotiated an agreement for AIMCOR to use a covered storage shed to ship its coke.

AIMCOR had planned for a bulk carrier to haul off the last of the coke from its open piles a week ago, but the ship was delayed by a typhoon. It hastily chartered two other ships, the Millennium Venture and the Hanjin Pittsburgh which arrived in Long Beach just before Christmas, to haul its coke to Japan. Metropolitan Stevedore Co. began loading the coke the day after Christmas and completed the job in three days - three days ahead of the state deadline.

Elimination of open storage is only one of a series of steps that the port has taken and will be taking to

minimize coke dust. AQMD rules adopted last year call for millions of dollars in improvements and include the elimination of uncovered storage, increased street sweeping, replacement of a ship loader, renovation of conveyors and truck washers, and the paving and reconstruction of a rail yard.