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CONTAINER CARGO VOLUME IN MAY LONG BEACH'S HIGHEST EVER

The second-best import month and the best export levels in three years propelled the Port of Long Beach in May to its best-ever monthly container cargo total.

Shipping terminals at the port handled the equivalent of 406,772 20-foot-long containers in May, an increase of 3.1 percent over the same month last year. This May's total surpasses the previous monthly best of 402,710 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in September.

The May total included 315,786 loaded TEUs -- the highest-ever loaded container total in a single month for any U.S. port.

Amid a continuing rebound in Asia, the number of loaded export containers jumped 11.7 percent to 97,770 TEUs in May -- the first time since mid-1997 that exports have topped 90,000 TEUs for three consecutive months.

The number of loaded inbound containers climbed to 218,016 TEUs in May, a modest 6 percent improvement over last May when imports jumped to beat a hike in cargo rates. This May's import total was the second best month after September's 219,080 TEUs.

The U.S. appetite for Asia-produced clothing, shoes, toys and consumer electronics remains strong, suggesting that high import volumes are likely to continue through the peak shipping season -- June through October -- when trade volumes are boosted by Christmas holiday products.

Port Executive Director Richard D. Steinke said cargo is moving smoothly through Long Beach.

“Record volumes of cargo are crossing our docks,” he said. “We are committed to helping our terminals move cargo quickly and efficiently.”

As the peak season draws near, port officials have been meeting with the railroads to request more manpower and equipment to keep the intermodal system flowing. Shipping terminals in Long Beach are opening their gates longer and later for more pickups and deliveries. Many of them subscribe to an Internet system that allows shippers to track more than 100,000 cargo containers at one time.