



Port-related Air Pollution Surveyed

Analysis shows progress, areas of concern amid cargo increase

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The Port of Long Beach this week released an analysis of air pollution from port-related sources from 2002 to 2005, a period of tremendous growth in cargo movement at the Port.

The study showed two notable successes – a nearly 50 percent cut in air pollution from cargo-handling equipment thanks to a Port-sponsored program, and a drop in emissions from harbor craft. From other major sources – ships, trains and trucks – the study showed pollution increases during the three-year period under study.

However, Port officials noted, the study shows a significant decrease in air pollution per container, pointing to greater efficiency in the goods movement industry. In addition, the study period predates the 2006 San Pedro Bay Ports Clean Air Action Plan, a cooperative program to cut air emissions by 45 percent or more within five years.

“This study underscores several important points,” said Rick Cameron, Manager of Environmental Planning. “First that we are on the right track with our aggressive programs to cut air pollution from ships, trains and trucks. Second, it shows that when we focus our attention on air pollution problems from specific sources, we see dramatic results.”

In 2002 the Port began the Diesel Emissions Reduction Program, which replaced or retrofitted more than 600 pieces of cargo handling equipment – the tractors and other vehicles that move containers at Port terminals. As a result, pollution from cargo equipment was cut by nearly 50 percent.

According to the survey, Port terminals increased container cargo movement by nearly 50 percent from 2002 to 2005. However, pollution did not increase at a corresponding rate. Particulate matter increased by about 10 percent and NOx, a building block of smog, increased by about 15 percent.

Because of calls by increasingly larger ships, Port terminals moved more containers but generated significantly less pollution for each container. Pollution per container dropped by nearly 26 percent during the three-year study period.

The Clean Air Action Plan outlines specific, aggressive strategies to address the areas of concern raised in the study – ships, trains, trucks. The Port’s strategies include shoreside electricity for ships at berth, the “Green Flag” vessel speed reduction program, low-emissions trains, the widespread use of cleaner fuels, and a Clean Trucks Program now in development.

The Port's Green Flag program, for example, has reached more than 90 percent participation and has already reduced hundreds of tons of air pollution. And Pacific Harbor Line, the Port's switching railroad, is converting its entire fleet of locomotives to cleaner-diesel engines.

"This report tells us what we expected – that we need to zero in on ships, trucks and trains and ensure they are using the cleanest, most environmentally friendly technology available," Cameron said. "And that's exactly what we are doing."

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