



**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact: Randy James**

[randy@sugermangroup.com](mailto:randy@sugermangroup.com) | (310) 974-6684

## **New Queuing Process for Container Vessels Bound For Ports of LA/Long Beach to Improve Safety and Air Quality Off California Coast**

*Updated Process Developed by PMA, PMSA and Marine Exchange Designed to  
Dramatically Reduce Vessel Congestion Along the Coastline*

LOS ANGELES (November 11, 2021) — A working group of maritime industry leaders is introducing a plan to improve safety and air quality off the Southern California coast through a new queuing process for container vessels that will dramatically reduce the number of backlogged ships at anchorage off the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach over the coming months.

Developed by the Pacific Maritime Association, Pacific Merchant Shipping Association and Marine Exchange of Southern California, as well as individuals from member companies, the new procedures respond to the historic supply chain congestion that continues to slow trade at the twin ports, North America's largest maritime gateway.

Effective Nov. 16, the updated process will prevent large numbers of vessels from dropping anchor off the Southern California coast while they wait for a berth, improving air quality and safety. The changes are poised to drive a steep reduction of ships at anchorage at the ports, where approximately 92 vessels were anchored or awaiting berth earlier this week. The new process will not apply to ships currently in the arrival queue.

The process calls for each vessel to be assigned a place in the arrival queue based on their departure time from their last port of call, and requires vessels to wait for an available berth approximately 150 miles off the California coast. This process will allow vessels to slow their speed and spread out, reducing vessels at anchor before the onset of winter weather, in addition to reducing emissions near the coastline. Under the current system, container vessels enter the arrival queue based on when they cross a line 20 nautical miles from the San Pedro Bay Port Complex.

"The new container vessel queuing process creates a fair and transparent system to reduce vessels at anchor near the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach," said PMA CEO Jim McKenna. "Designed through strong collaboration between the PMA, PMSA and Marine Exchange of Southern California, this new procedure will improve maritime safety and air quality while helping ensure ports operate as efficiently as possible."

Vessels will operate outside the new boundaries known as the Safety and Air Quality Area, designed by the Marine Exchange of Southern California to limit the number of container vessels near the port complex. While awaiting a berth, eastbound ships must remain 150 miles west of Southern California, while northbound and southbound ships must remain more than 50 miles from California and Mexico. Vessels can come into the harbor for fuel, crew changes and regular ship business per normal processes.

“The San Pedro Bay Ports play a critical role in California’s statewide economic health,” said PMSA President John McLaurin. “This system delivers a pragmatic solution through order and predictability that will reduce the number of ships idling off the coast in the coming months, improve safety, and support the efficient movement of container-based goods.”

“A safe, secure, efficient, reliable and environmentally sound marine transportation system is essential to our economy, which is why this new system is so vital,” said Marine Exchange of Southern California Executive Director Capt. James Kipling Louttit. “Our organization is thrilled to have helped develop a process that relies on comprehensive, real-time data to support the health of our ports.”

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For more information visit: <http://pacmms.org/>



# New Container Vessel Queuing Process for CONTAINER SHIPS for Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach

Effective 4PM Monday 15 November Pacific Standard Time

## Background

Based on the high level of container vessels off the coast of southern California and the risks posed to maritime safety and air quality, an Industry Working Group was formed to develop a new vessel queuing process. The purpose was to find a fair and transparent process to reduce vessels at anchor/loitering area, allow for vessels to slow steam and optimize voyage transit time.

**Problem Definition:** Increase Safety and Improve Air Quality

- **Increase Safety** – Approximately 90 vessels have been anchored, loitering or awaiting a berth at Los Angeles and Long Beach in past months. With winter weather imminent, space between ships needs to increase, and the number of ships close to the ports needs to decrease.
- **Improve Air Quality** – The number of ships idling off the coast needs to decrease to reduce air emissions.

## Executive Summary of Current and New Process:

**Current Process:** Container vessels are assigned into the arrival queue based on when they **actually arrive** and cross a line 20 nautical miles from the ports of Los Angeles (LA) and Long Beach (LB).

**New Process:** This voluntary process will have container vessels assigned a place in the queue based on when they **depart their last port of call (LPOC)** before Los Angeles and Long Beach. The benefit of this new queuing system is that vessels can slow steam and spread out across the Pacific rather than crowd into the congested waters off Los Angeles and Long Beach while they await a berth.

## Voluntary Safety Protocols for Container Ships

- The Industry Working Group developed a Safety and Air Quality Area (see chart) which will limit the number of container vessels allowed in southern California waters.
- Current vessels at anchor and loitering will remain in place.

At the current rate, it may take four to six weeks to get down to the desired levels of vessels at anchor (25 to 35 vessels)

## Pacific Maritime Management Service (PacMMS)

Until vessels have a berthing assignment in the reasonable future (defined as 72 hours), vessels must stay out the outlined Safety and Air Quality area:

- a. Coming from the North and South:  
More than 50 miles from California and Mexico
- b. Coming from the West:  
More than 150 miles from shore to remain well clear of DOD Ranges (outlined in magenta).
- c. Anchorages 40-60% full (25-35 vessels)
- d. Vessels loiter by exception, such as getting underway from anchor for storm, etc.

### e. Exceptions:

1. Vessels not carrying containers
2. Container ships in normal transits to/from ports for normal operations such as bunkers
3. Force Majeure & Emergencies

