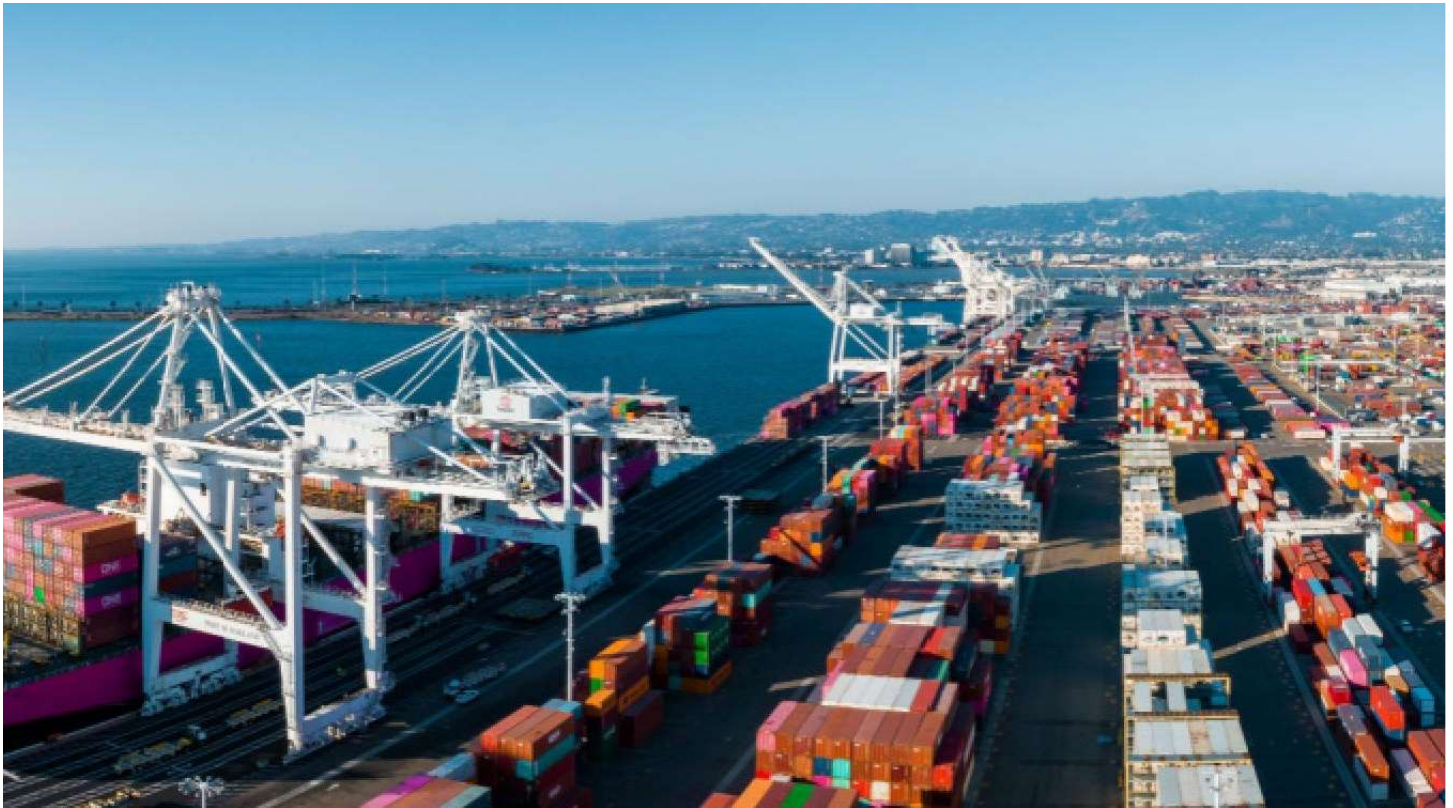


Seattle effectively shut, vessel backup builds in LA-LB amid ILWU job actions



Fully worked vessels were backing up in Los Angeles and Long Beach Wednesday because workers were not being dispatched to some ships, preventing them from leaving the ports. Photo credit: RAW-films / Shutterstock.com.

Bill Mongelluzzo, Senior Editor | Jun 7, 2023, 3:51 PM EDT

Poor work productivity has effectively shut the Port of Seattle, while a half-dozen vessels have been prevented from departing Southern California due to insufficient longshore labor as job actions by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) continued to disrupt operations at West Coast marine terminals Wednesday.

That came as coastwide contract negotiations between the ILWU and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), which represents shipping lines and terminal operators, were scheduled to resume Wednesday after being suspended Tuesday following the death of a longshore worker in Oakland who suffered a stroke.

The *Journal of Commerce* spoke to three sources close to the fast-moving situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Port of Seattle was effectively shut Wednesday and dockworkers were sent home because crane productivity was about 30% of normal. Tacoma was still working even though crane productivity was about 50% of normal, according to a source.

The delay in vessel departures from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach on Wednesday was caused by the refusal of the ILWU to dispatch key workers known as lashers, sources said.

At least a half-dozen vessels that were almost completely worked and scheduled to depart from the ports could not leave because the final process step — lashing the top row of containers to secure them on the vessel — could not be performed due to a lack of labor sent from the ILWU hiring hall.

“Five or six vessels are sitting there because there are no lashers,” said one source.

“The ships are being worked, but then they’re going to anchor because there are no lashers” a second source said.

The Marine Exchange of Southern California, which keeps a log of vessel arrivals and departures, confirmed the departure delays.

The Port of Oakland was shut for the first shift Wednesday following the death of the longshore worker on Tuesday. A port spokesperson said Oakland was scheduled to reopen for the second shift on Wednesday.

Some rail service to LA-LB temporarily halted

The labor situation at the ports was also posing a threat to intermodal rail service in Southern California. A spokesperson for Union Pacific Railroad told the *Journal of Commerce* it temporarily paused rail service Tuesday at three marine terminals in Los Angeles-Long Beach because freight was backing up at UP’s inland terminals, but those restrictions were lifted Wednesday. BNSF told the *Journal of Commerce* it had not restricted train service to Southern California.

West Coast contract negotiations, which began in May 2022 and have spawned numerous job actions over the past 13 months that have delayed cargo-handling operations, are hung up on the issue of wages. Sources told the *Journal of Commerce* earlier this week the ILWU is demanding an almost 100% increase in the straight-time hourly wage and wants all longshore workers to be paid two overtime hours for

working an eight-hour shift. The PMA is reportedly offering a low-single-digit wage increase, sources said.

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Senior Editor Ari Ashe contributed to this report.

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