

The U.S. port congestion is worsening, with the number of container ships waiting to enter the largest U.S. gateway for transpacific trade swelling to another pandemic record, [Bloomberg](#) reports.

The situation is adding delays and costs during peak season for companies to rebuild inventories.

Fifty-five vessels were anchored or idling further offshore waiting to offload at the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, California, as of late Friday, up from [40 two weeks ago](#), according to officials who monitor marine traffic in San Pedro Bay.

The average wait rose to 8.5 days compared with 7.6 in late August, according to L.A. port [data](#).

L.A. officials have exhausted their designated anchorage space for overflow traffic and had a record 17 ships in so-called drift zones -- areas used in times of extreme volume where they wait for room in shallower water to drop anchor safely.

The ships in queue have a combined capacity to carry nearly 375,000 20-foot containers, according to data compiled by the Marine Exchange of Southern California. That's about the same amount of inbound boxes that the Los Angeles port handled in a month on average before the pandemic.

And experts don't expect a slowdown in cargo as peak season nears.

There is a "60% increase in the inbound outbound ratio at the ports of US West Coast, surpassing the pre-covid levels, indicating that there is excessive stress on the ports, and therefore indicating further congestion is expected in the coming months as we approach the holiday season in the later part of the year," Dr. Johannes Schlingmeier, co-founder and CEO of Container xChange, said in a press release.

Cargo volumes have been growing for several months. The Port of Long Beach has broken cargo monthly records in 12 of the last 13 month.

Through July, the port processed 5.5 million TEUs, a 32% increase over the same period last year, according to the Port of Long Beach. The Port of Los Angeles has processed [6.3 million TEUs](#) in the 2021 calendar year.

Companies across the supply chain are taking action to mitigate the port congestion. Shippers are booking in advance even if it means paying more. Carriers are doubling orders

for container ships, and 3PLs like C.H. Robinson are applying drayage surcharges at ports in Long Beach and Los Angeles.

Customers are already shifting cargo to ports along the East Coast, Gulf or Pacific Northwest. The Southern California ports play a dominant role due to their capacity, but customers at Seko Logistics have been looking at charters to transport goods.