

## **The New York Times**

Dockworkers' Union Calls for Cleaner Air at Seaports

By RANDAL C. ARCHIBOLD

LONG BEACH, Calif., Jan. 30 < The effort to reduce smog stemming from seaports, among the biggest polluters in the nation, gained an ally on Monday when the union representing thousands of West Coast dockworkers promised to help significantly reduce toxic emissions.

The union, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, representing 60,000 dockworkers from San Diego to Seattle, called for a one-fifth reduction in emissions by 2010 and said it would push carriers to adopt less-polluting technology on their ships.

The announcement, at a conference here of state and local officials examining the problem, reflected a growing concern that the sharp increase in shipping on the West Coast, fueled by the boom in Asian imports in the past decade, has come at a heavy cost.

About 40 percent of the nation's cargo passes through ports here and in Los Angeles next door, which combined are the busiest in the country. Several recent studies have linked port pollution < chiefly from diesel fumes given off by the ships and the trucks and trains carrying goods to and from them < with smog, cancer, asthma and other health problems in nearby communities.

While the Los Angeles region's air has become cleaner in the past three decades, air quality regulators have identified the ports as the biggest contributors of particulate matter, a major ingredient in smog.

"The thousands of men and women I represent and work for raise their families under the cloud of port pollution," said Jim Spinosa, president of the union, which, he added, will reach out to locals across the country for support. "They have made a simple demand of their union. While they want to earn a good living, they do not want to pay with their lives for a stronger economy."

Mr. Spinosa said the union would work with carriers and port authorities to meet its goal, but he did not rule out making it part of negotiations during the next contract talks, in 2008. In 2002, employers locked out dockworkers for 10 days during bitter contract negotiations, costing the American economy billions of dollars in lost trade.

Concerns about pollution have been raised around ports in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Seattle, which have also benefited from growing imports of Far East goods, mostly electronics and clothing. In a 2004 report, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Clean Air Coalition called seaports "the largest and most poorly regulated sources of urban pollution in the country."

Environmentalists have accused port officials of being slow to respond to the problem out of fear that stringent pollution control measures would encourage carriers to take their business to other ports.

Melissa Lin Perrella, a lawyer with the Natural Resources Defense Council, which has successfully sued Los Angeles to put in some pollution control measures, cheered the union's move as critical to bringing public pressure to bear and developing a unified attack on the problem.

"It is huge," she said. "It really shows that green isn't just good for our health but also good for business. Union workers on the front lines breathe in toxic fumes and often live in the community around the ports."

Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa of Los Angeles vowed to use the city's Board of Harbor Commissioners, which oversees the port, to speed up environmental efforts, though he remained committed to increasing business, too. He called for expanded use of measures like cleaner fuels for dockside tractors and "cold ironing," in which docked ships plug into city power instead of idling their engines for electricity.

"We are a bellwether city, a bellwether region, and we are going to show people we are going to grow this port but grow it greener," Mr. Villaraigosa said.

Jim McKenna, the president and chief executive of the Pacific Maritime Association, which represents carriers and terminal companies, said the group had been talking with port and government officials for the past year about plans to reduce emissions.

Though he declined to embrace the union's goal < "I can't tell you if that's a good number or a bad number" < he said his group recognized the pollution concerns, as well as ports' fears of slowing down growth. His group has traditionally scoffed at measures pushed by environmentalists like fees on containers coming off ships to pay for pollution control.

"Reducing emissions and expanding the ports' capacity are connected, and both are a priority of our industries," he said.