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## Huge Container Ships--One of the Most Poorly Regulated Air Pollution Sources in California

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Huge cargo ships carrying thousands of containers filled with consumer goods across the Pacific Ocean to California ports are one of the most poorly regulated sources of air pollution in the state.

For years, the Coalition for Clean Air (CCA) has focused on addressing this ship pollution and advocating for aggressive action to clean the air. CCA recently had the opportunity to discuss the health impacts of ship emissions – and how these emissions should be reduced – at a Feb. 7-9 conference on international marine issues in San Diego.

The conference was attended by more than 250 shipping company executives, port officials, regulatory agency representatives, engine manufacturers and retailers from around the world. Sponsored in part by the US EPA, the event was organized to encourage dialogue among participants about new technological strategies to meet clean air goals.

Containerships are more than three football fields in length, and they run on arguably the dirtiest fuel in the world. These ships spew toxic diesel particulates and smog-forming pollution while navigating California's coastal waters and while docked for days at a time.

The health impacts from these ships are staggering. The California Air Resources Board recently estimated that big ships are responsible for up to one premature death per day in our state and are the primary source of elevated cancer risk to neighboring communities. To learn about port diesel risk go to this [large PDF](#). With trade volumes expected to triple by 2025, the pollution contribution from ships is only expected to get worse.

As one of two environmental representatives asked to present during the three-day conference, I discussed the Coalition for Clean Air's vision for addressing the local and global challenges presented by marine pollution. I emphasized recent studies further demonstrating the health effects from diesel particulates and smog-forming emissions.

Additionally, I highlighted what can and should be done to address this pollution source including timelines for adopting cleaner, cost effective technologies. As an example, technology such as plugging in a ship to dockside power to run its engines on electricity has been demonstrated successfully on large ships and can virtually eliminate pollution while a ship is at berth. Also, cleaner fuels with significantly lower sulfur content in ship engines are one of the simplest ways to address ship pollution and can be done today.

CCA's past work has helped draw attention to the marine issue. A few years ago, CCA joined the NRDC and local homeowner groups in a successful lawsuit against the Port of Los Angeles which resulted in the first containerships in the world plugging into dockside power.

CCA also helped convince the California Air Resources Board to adopt a regulation to require cleaner fuels in the smaller, auxiliary engines on ships. This regulation went into effect last month and is expected to prevent over 500 premature deaths in California.

CCA continues to advocate at the local and state level to secure further regulation of large ships and to create a dedicated funding stream to improve air quality by establishing a fee on every container that comes through California's ports. To learn more about [SB 974](#), the Port Investment Bill by state Sen. Alan Lowenthal, click [here](#).

Notably, one clear message was agreed upon at the San Diego conference: All parties said that urgent steps need to be taken now to improve air quality.

[Click here to see a slide presentation of Marine Emissions report given at the Clean Ships Conference in 2006.](#)

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