

Baltimore port hits auto-handling record

Cargo Business News

The Port of Baltimore announced its record-breaking year for auto-handling continued in October with 43,057 units passing through its marine terminals, up from 42,830 handled for the same month in 2010.

The port said in a statement that 18,592 autos were exported through its terminals in October, surpassing October 2008's top mark of 16,041.

Patch.com

Port of Baltimore Hits New Cargo Record

The number of autos handled during October reaches an all-time monthly high.

By Bruce Vail

Continuing a streak of good news for the Port of Baltimore, state officials announced this week that it had set an all-time record for the number of autos handled in a single month.

A total of 43,057 autos were moved off and on oceangoing cargo ships during the month, eclipsing the previous record of 42,830 set back in 2010, according to port spokesman Richard Scher.

Most of the shipments were imports from leading Asian and European auto manufacturers, but the port also handled a growing number of U.S.-manufactured cars being sent overseas. Precisely 18,592 cars were exported, marking another record in that particular category, Scher said.

The October cargo handling record continues an excellent year for the port, which earlier this year had announced that the first six months had also set new records for auto handling on the docks.

"Probably some of the increased cargo is because of us, but the business has been up for all the shipping companies and terminal operators," commented Doug Wolfe, port manager for Ceres Terminals, one of the port's leading cargo handlers.

In 2010, Ceres completed a major expansion of its operation in Baltimore, adding 12 acres of cargo handling space to its existing five acres at Dundalk Marine Terminal. Ceres is a unit of the giant Japanese shipping company NYK Line, a major user of the Port of Baltimore.

"Our volumes have increased quite a bit from two years ago. What's driving this trend is increased sales (to consumers) by the car dealerships. It's a trend we're seeing all around," Wolfe said.

Scher agreed. The increases "aren't due to any particular shipping line or any particular car maker. There are increases in virtually all categories," he said

"It's been a very strong year for the port, and that's good news for the whole region and it's great for jobs," Scher said.

Some 1,150 shoreside jobs are generated by the port's auto handling business, officials said. Many of these are well-paid longshore jobs, because the cars are typically driven off and on the cargo ships by individual longshore workers.

Scher also credited the rise in cargo volumes to a local program to ensure high-quality handling of the cars. Called QCHAT, the program aims to lessen damage to the cars as they are moved around the docks, a key factor in attracting the business of car makers and shipping lines, Scher said.

"With these new records, the Port of Baltimore has further strengthened its reputation as one of the top auto handling in the nations," Gov. Martin O'Malley said in a written statement.

"Autos are a good economic indicator. When they are moving at record pace through the port, that means consumer demand is high. More cars coming over Baltimore's docks also means more work for the thousands of men and women in our port labor force," O'Malley stated.