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Watchmen could strike Sunday at the Los Angeles-Long Beach port complex

The dispute could disrupt terminals handling 85% of Long Beach cargo in a gateway already burdened by 35,000 containers on rail

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A possible strike by port watchmen at the Los Angeles and Long Beach harbor complex could begin on Sunday, November 1, raising the risk of new delays at a major U.S. trade gateway as cargo volumes remain high and rail congestion persists.

The warning came in a global logistics update issued on Friday, October 30, by the Wine and Spirits Shippers Association, which said ILWU Local 26, the union's watchmen division, had authorized a strike when its contract extension expires on Sunday, November 1. The group represents about 2% of International Longshore and Warehouse Union members, but the association said the dispute could still have a wider effect because other ILWU members may choose to honor picket lines.

According to the update, terminals that handle about 85% of Long Beach cargo and 33% of Los Angeles cargo could be affected if the action goes forward. The Pacific Maritime Association has said it will continue negotiating. As of the Friday, October 30 update, the association said it was waiting for more news and hoped another contract extension would be reached.

The threat comes at a difficult time for shippers. The association said both ports already had a rail backlog of more than 35,000 containers, and it described cargo volumes as being at record highs. It also said last-minute port omissions by carriers and

weak schedule reliability have continued to disrupt inventory planning.

For beverage importers and exporters, a disruption at Los Angeles and Long Beach could be especially costly. Wine, beer, spirits and other drinks often move through those ports, and any slowdown could delay inbound shipments, raise drayage and storage costs, and increase the risk of tight inventories for wholesalers and retailers during a busy sales period. Companies moving temperature-sensitive products could face added pressure if containers sit longer than planned in yards or on rail.

The U.S. West Coast labor risk is part of a broader wave of transport disruptions that the association said is affecting trade flows in several regions. In Italy, port terminal workers were on strike on Friday, October 30, with major ports expected to be closed. The association said shippers should expect delays, possible vessel schedule changes and backlogs once work resumes.

In France, the association said 24-hour work stoppages were under way on Friday, October 30, at Le Havre, Marseille-Fos and Bordeaux. At Rouen, it said the stoppage was partial but terminal activity would be slower. The result, it said, was likely to be delays in container handling, changes to vessel schedules and disruption to road and rail collections and deliveries. The CGT national federation of ports and docks has also filed notice for a 24-hour national port strike on November 5, adding another date that shippers will have to manage around.

In South America, the association said an indefinite truckers’ strike began on Thursday, October 29, at Chile’s Port of San Antonio. More than 40 independent operators were reportedly blocking terminal access with about 200 trucks. The protest, led by the Independent Truckers Associations, stems from complaints about rising fuel costs and a planned electronic toll expansion on Route 78, according to the update. The association said the action was expected to continue until the Chilean government responds, with delays in container pickup and delivery and a backlog likely after operations resume.

Spain could present another problem later in the month. The association said the country’s two largest unions had called a 24-hour nationwide general strike for November 11 over housing and wages. It said it was too early to measure the likely impact on ports and trucking, but some logistics providers were already moving

services scheduled for that day to earlier dates to avoid missed sailings.

Beyond labor disputes, the association said companies are also tracking trade policy issues that could affect supply chains. It noted that a three-judge panel at the Court of International Trade heard arguments on September 30 in a consolidated challenge involving Section 301 forced-labor tariffs of 10% and 12.5% on goods from 60 trading partners, but no ruling has been issued. It also said the separate Section 301 excess-capacity investigation that includes the European Union still has no findings, and that importers should continue paying the tariff tied to the Irish whiskey pledge because no Federal Register notice has been published to change that.

Taken together, the update described a shipping environment in which labor unrest, congestion and policy uncertainty are all hitting supply chains at once. For U.S. businesses that depend on steady imports through the West Coast, especially in the beverage trade, the possible action at Los Angeles and Long Beach stands out because even a limited dispute could spread through terminals, rail networks and warehouse schedules that are already under strain.