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Major Shipping Company To Slash Smokestack Air Pollution

Maersk Line switches to cleaner marine fuels and sets new nationwide standard

All Maersk Line ships calling on California ports are switching to cleaner fuels within 24 miles of the coastline – a move that will cut 400 tons of air pollution each year. The company announced today that the 10 vessels per week calling on the Ports of Los Angeles and Oakland will burn low-sulfur marine distillate fuel instead of dirty bunker oil in all main and auxiliary engines – exceeding new state regulations that will go into effect in January 2007.

“Maersk’s bold action marks the dawn of a new world order for shipping, where operating on cleaner fuels becomes standard practice,” said Teri Shore, Clean Vessels Campaign Director for Bluewater Network in San Francisco – which has advocated for cleaner ship fuels for more than five years. “Maersk is showing that shippers can clean up their smokestacks now and reduce human harm from diesel exhaust while safely delivering goods to port. The company deserves high praise for this commitment.”

Until now, some maritime industry lobbyists have claimed that switching from bunker fuels to lighter marine fuels would cause ship engines to fail. When Bluewater Network introduced legislation requiring ships to switch to cleaner marine fuels in California three years ago, shipping executives claimed it was unsafe and that ships would blow up if they were forced to change fuel types.

Since then, the California Air Resources Board passed a regulation that requires all ships to use marine distillate fuels in auxiliary engines within 24 nautical miles of the coast beginning in January 2007. But main engines were left out of the rule pending safety and other concerns.

Maersk Line is the largest containerized cargo carrier in the world. The first ship switched over in March 2006. Using the cleaner fuel will reduce emissions of cancer-causing diesel particulate matter by 73 percent. Sulfur oxides emissions that contribute to smog will be reduced 90 percent. Smog forming nitrogen oxides will be reduced 10 percent. The company is also considering additional air pollution controls to further cut smog-forming gases.

Bluewater Network works to stop environmental damage from vehicles and vessels, and to protect human health and the planet by reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Bluewater Network is a division of Friends of the Earth – the U. S. voice of the world’s largest network of environmental groups with one million supporters in 70 countries across five continents.

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