

Gulf Coast ports see mixed year-over-year results in freight volumes

Corpus Christi, New Orleans see higher cargo shipments; Houston dips slightly in 2023

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Port Houston's total container volumes fell 4% year over year in 2023, which officials attributed to a decline in empty-container movements. (Photo: Jim Allen/FreightWaves)

Port Houston sees container shipments slip in 2023

During 2023, cargo volumes moving through [Port Houston's](#) two container terminals were down 4% year over year (y/y) compared to 2022, with a total of 3.8 million twenty-foot equivalent units handled during the year.

Total steel tonnage (imports and exports) was down 14% y/y in 2023 at 4.4 million tons.

Officials attributed the y/y decrease in 2023 to a large drop in empty container volumes, which registered an 18% y/y decline at 649,057 TEUs.

“As we begin 2024 our eye is on making continued strategic investments to facilitate larger vessels and more of our region’s cargo,” Roger Guenther, executive director at Port Houston, said in a [news release](#). “We are adding important landside capacity at our two container terminals and making good progress on the Houston Ship Channel Expansion (Project 11).”

Port Houston ended 2023 on a high note, with cargo volume in December up 11% y/y at 325,020 TEUs.

Loaded imports and exports were both up 11% y/y in December, totaling 150,648 TEUs and 119,970 TEUs, respectively.

Imports of steel declined 27% y/y in December to 336,773 tons, while exports of steel were up 324% y/y, from 548 tons to 2,323 tons.

General imports increased 13% y/y in December at 492,365 tons, while container exports jumped 190% to 955,668 tons.

Empty container exports fell 5% y/y in December to 39,588 TEUs, while imports of empty containers rose 104% y/y to 14,814 TEUs.

Total revenue tonnage increased 87% y/y to 4.8 million tons in December.

Ship calls for December were up 7% y/y to 700 vessels. Barges calling Port Houston increased 66% y/y to 296.

Port of New Orleans reports 12% increase in container volumes

Boosted by shipments of coffee, chemicals and plastic resins, the [Port of New Orleans](#) saw a 12% y/y rise in container volumes at 481,593 TEUs during 2023.

“We had 20,016 container moves by barge during the calendar year 2023, a 15% [y/y] increase,” port spokeswoman Kimberly Curth told FreightWaves. “It’s the highest year ever since 2016 when the service started.”

The Port of New Orleans also had a total of 406 vessel calls in 2023, which represents a 22% y/y increase.

For the month of December, the port handled 37,539 TEUs, a 17% y/y increase. The port also handled 82,186 tons of breakbulk cargo, a 29% y/y increase. Top breakbulk items during the month included steel, natural rubber and lumber.

The port handled 8,729 Class I rail car switches in December.

Port of Corpus Christi records increase in exports of crude oil, petroleum products

[The Port of Corpus Christi](#) saw an 8% y/y increase in total cargo to 203 million tons in 2023.

Exports of crude oil led the way in 2023, followed by shipments of petroleum and dry bulk goods.

The port handled 126 million tons of crude oil during the year, a 12% increase compared to 2022. Exports of crude oil for 2023 topped 117 million tons, a 14% increase over 2022.

Total shipments of petroleum were at 62 million tons during 2023, a 1% y/y increase, led by exports at 48.9 million tons, a 1.2% increase compared to 2022.

The Port of Corpus Christi handled 8 million tons of dry bulk goods last year, a 1% decrease compared to 2022.

For December, the port handled 19.1 million tons of cargo, a 14% y/y increase compared to the same month in 2022.

Crude oil exports in December totaled 11.2 million tons, an 11% increase from 2022. Exports of petroleum were 5.6 million tons for December, a 10% y/y increase.

The port had 8,114 ship and barge calls in 2023, a 5% y/y increase from 2022. For December, Corpus Christi handled 714 vessels, a 6% y/y increase.