

Extreme weather blocks vessel traffic around South Africa

Conditions exacerbate container shipping delays related to Red Sea detours

[Eric Kulisch](#)

Wednesday, July 10, 2024



Sea conditions are too dangerous this week for commercial ships to transit around the lower tip of

Severe storm conditions off the coast of South Africa have temporarily halted vessel movements. The rough seas are exacerbating supply chain delays caused by diversions around the Red Sea to avoid Houthi rebel attacks on commercial shipping, according to logistics companies and commodity analysts.

Denmark-based Scan Global Logistics alerted customers on Wednesday that extreme weather conditions around the Cape of Good Hope have forced

container lines to seek shelter from high winds and waves over 33 feet high.

Shipping researchers at the London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) said in an advisory that no containerships have passed the Cape since Monday. The data analytics provider relies on daily transit data for vessels and vessel location data to gain a comprehensive picture of shipping traffic.

“We have a complete stop at the Cape of Good Hope for containerships – east and west. There is no significant change in Red Sea traffic so far, but several containerships have made turnarounds and/or are waiting off the coast of Durban,” said Fabrice Maille, global head of shipping and agriculture at LSEG, in the bulletin.

The high waves were generated by a strong cyclone that moved through the region on Sunday, likely triggered by temperatures that were well below normal, according to LSEG’s weather team.

Another cyclone is likely to impact South Africa later this week, which could mean a continuation of extremely rough seas for several more days, it said.

Flexport CEO Ryan Petersen posted on X that that there are about 600 container ships routing around Africa now that could be impacted by the extreme weather.

Vessel diversions around the Red Sea since late November have added 10 days or more to the voyage between Europe and Asia, thrown off vessel schedules and stranded containers in many locations. Several ports in Asia and Europe are experiencing congestion as shipping volumes increase, with ships forced to anchor at sea for several days waiting for a berth.

The bulk ship MV Ultra Galaxy was abandoned in waters northwest of Cape Town on Monday and its 18-member Filipino crew rescued from a lifeboat by a fishing vessel, the South African Maritime Safety Authority said on X.

The vessel left the port of Walvis Bay in Namibia around July 4 and was headed to Dar es Salaam, according to ship tracking data compiled by Bloomberg.

Meanwhile, ports in Texas remained closed in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl, which came ashore on Monday.