



January 6, 2015

Dear valued customers,

The latest news regarding negotiations between ILWU and PMA:

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service announced late Monday that in response to a joint request from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Pacific Maritime Association, contract negotiations between the two parties will proceed under the auspices of the FMCS "as soon as possible."

The FMCS announcement is a major breakthrough in negotiations that had stalled in recent months. Furthermore, the PMA said ILWU work slowdowns that began in late October have contributed to severe congestion at all major West Coast ports.

Although the PMA on Dec. 22 requested federal mediation, the FMCS could not act until the ILWU also requested assistance. The union did so late Monday. PMA spokesman Steve Getzug said Monday the employers' group had no further comment at this time. The ILWU was not immediately available for comment.

The FMCS said Deputy Director Scot Beckenbaugh, a senior mediator with "extensive experience in this industry," would join the negotiations as soon as possible. As is customary, the FMCS would offer no further details.

Dozens of organizations representing shippers and transportation intermediaries, as well as all of the West Coast container ports and many news organizations on the coast had requested federal mediation. The FMCS was credited with helping the International Longshoremen's Association and United States Maritime Alliance agree on a six-year contract in March 2013 after the sides had reached an impasse.

The FMCS is an independent federal agency that serves as a neutral third party to assist with labor negotiations. The FMCS cannot impose a settlement, but its mediators act as an intermediary to help the two sides reach an agreement.

Contract negotiations between the ILWU and PMA began on May 12. The ILWU has been working without a contract since the previous one expired on July 1. Although there were no serious work stoppages or slowdowns for months, things suddenly turned sour at the end of October with slowdowns that started in the Pacific Northwest and then spread to Southern California and Oakland, the PMA stated.

The news that the ILWU had joined the PMA in requesting federal mediation came at the end of the first day of talks since the two sides broke for the holidays, and amid growing belief that jurisdiction over the controversial issue of chassis maintenance and repair was a main barrier to progress in negotiations. (via JOC.com)

Regards,  
*Sea Shipping Line eNews*

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