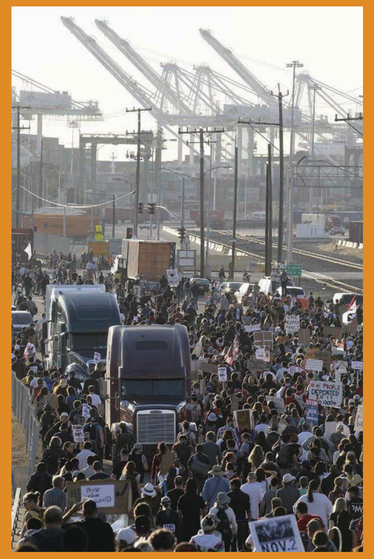
Port of Oakland

The clothes you wear, the phone in your pocket, the coffee you drink, and the shoes on your feet–they all likely came here in one of the Lego-like stacked containers you see across the harbor. More than 1,500 ships visit the Port of Oakland each year, shipping goods to and from locations in every continent except Africa and Antarctica.

Leaving California are fruits, nuts and vegetables from the California Central Valley, wine from the Napa Valley region, beef, pork and poultry from the Midwest and lots of other goods from California and across the United States. The Port of Oakland works closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to keep the water in the channel deep enough (50 feet) for the massive container ships to float above the bottom of the Bay. This annual task involves dredging to remove debris and sediment from the bottom of the harbor, ensuring that goods can be transported efficiently and safely.

The Port's giant cranes can reach 395 feet high–as tall as a 35-story office building, lifting 65 tons of containers at a time. That's the weight of 12 elephants. All that at a speed of 230 feet per minute!

Photo: R. Schnaible



The economic power of the Port of Oakland as a cargo and transportation hub has made it the site of many strikes, protests and demonstrations since it was completed in 1936. Labor strikes throughout the Port's history, anti-war protests in 2003, the Occupy Oakland movement in 2011, and a rally to protest police violence in 2015 are some of the actions that have impacted or closed the Port entirely.

Photo: www.occupyoakland.org

How do Container Ships Work?

Containers are kept in port in organized stacks by type until the designated ship arrives.

A special chassis and cab called a bomb cart bring the containers to the ships side.

A container gantry crane lifts the container off of the truck and stevedores attach fittings if necessary.

Then a crane moves the container to the correct position on the ship. The container is lowered and released.

Containers are secured with lashing bars and turnbuckles. Upon completion the ship is ready to depart the port.

East Bay Regional Park District

www.ebparks.org