



Questions and Answers on Turn Times

Q: What is turn time and how to we measure it?

A: PierPass reports monthly turn time information averaged across all 13 marine container terminals in the Port of Los Angeles and Port of Long Beach.

The PierPass numbers reflect the time it takes for a truck to complete a single transaction – dropping off or picking up a container at the terminal. Truck activity information is derived from RFID data, and excludes lunch hour, breaks and trouble tickets.

In 2011, the ports, terminals and trucking community published a comprehensive turn time study using GPS to track trucks, available at <http://goo.gl/XFbcJG>. The study evaluated three time periods: “queue time,” the time spent waiting in line outside the gates; “terminal time,” measuring from the entry gate to the exit gate; and “visit time,” the sum of queue and terminal time. The monthly data PierPass provides on its website and its monthly newsletters shows terminal time.

The 2011 study found that the median outside-the-gate queue time was 20 minutes. Only 9% of waits in queues outside the gates were more than an hour. Only 3% of visits took three hours or more, including queue time and terminal time.

The study found that a vast majority of visits take less than two hours: 27% are under 30 minutes, 58% under an hour, 75% under one-and-a-half hours, and 86% under two hours. A further 12% took two to four hours, and about 1% to 2% of visits were in the four to eight hour range.

Turn time at individual terminals will vary depending on time of day and other factors.

Q: What isn't included in the turn times we report and why?

The terminals measure turn times to track their own efficiency. They exclude factors that terminals have only limited ability to control: problem transactions that generate trouble tickets, queue times outside the gates, and the lunch hours and breaks that are contractually mandated by labor contracts.

Queue times outside the gates reflect a combination of throughput inside the terminal and trucker decisions on when to arrive. Every day, trucks line up outside the terminals before the gates open for the daytime and OffPeak shifts.

Q: How do you account for double transactions, where a driver drops off an empty or an export container and picks up an import container?

They are counted as two transactions, so the visit time is effectively divided in two.