

Americas Containers

Walmart charters ships to help battle tricky peak season



Sam Chambers • August 19, 2021 6 1,935 1 minute read



Walmart has become the latest big American retail brand to take shipping matters into its own hands, chartering a number of ships.

The giant supermarket chain follows in the [footsteps of Home Depot](#) in deciding to move some of its goods on the transpacific via tonnage it controls rather than pay sky high rates to global liners for shipments that tend to arrive late.

In an earnings call on Tuesday, Walmart's CEO, John Furner, revealed: "We've chartered vessels ... we've secured capacity for the third and fourth quarter and feel good about the inventory positioning particularly compared to last year with inventory up 20% across the segments."

According to Steve Ferreira, the CEO of New York-based consultancy Ocean Audit, Walmart has already completed two voyages, both arriving in the US this month, using Walmart branded 53 ft containers. The first voyage had 177 53 ft boxes onboard, and the second one contained 247 similarly sized containers.

Shippers deciding to take control of their own supply chains is not restricted to chartering ships. *Splash* reported earlier this week of the decision of a major Canadian tyre manufacturer to [invest in an inland container terminal](#).

Ports in North America are [struggling to keep up with this year's peak season](#).

Giving an update on operations on Tuesday, Gene Seroka, the executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, America's largest boxport, said the challenge facing the entire supply chain amounts to "squeezing 10 lanes of freeway traffic into five lanes".

The port boss advised consumers to get their Christmas shopping plans in place far earlier this year or risk having some very disappointed family members come December 25.

The extraordinary pressure felt at many of America's ports on intermodal routes is making headlines daily in US mainstream media. Earlier in the summer the White House announced the creation of a Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force. Led by the secretaries of commerce, transportation and agriculture, the task force aims to bring together stakeholders "to diagnose problems and surface solutions – large and small, public or private – that could help alleviate bottlenecks and supply constraints."

#United States



Comments



David Boffey

August 19, 2021 at 5:21 pm

“Walmart branded 53 ft containers.” Really? So they have old special boxes on specially equipped ships? Sound like a very, very well thought out project. Ot is this Ro-Ro?

Reply



RMcK

August 19, 2021 at 6:00 pm

Are 53 foot spreaders easy to find, and can they pass between the crane legs?

Reply



David Boffey

August 19, 2021 at 8:07 pm

In the USA and Canada, yes, as they have been used for years for rail/road transport and some coastal trade.

Reply



JK Drone

August 19, 2021 at 6:12 pm

Three ship loads of Walmart container boxes departed from Shekou port on Saga Welco ships

Reply



David Boffey

August 19, 2021 at 8:06 pm

Thanks for that.

Reply



Christopher Osborne

August 19, 2021 at 10:00 pm

I can understand their reasoning here, and wish them the best of luck. However i expect they will need to see through a steep 'learning curve' and may well regret this move in the future. the other comments highlight potential issues with choosing 53 footers – taking on an operation like this as a newbie i can foresee a world of issues they have yet to think of. i wonder how well they will manage when their boat is delayed a few weeks or cargo doesn't make boats, or excessive quay rent costs due to a hiccup in supply chains, – any one of a thousands other tiny details that can lead to spiraling costs. they are either very well organised and have good experienced staff or consultants with loads of experience, or i worry they may live to regret this move. i wonder if they are prepared to play on a paying field where they aren't one of the big boys who always gets what they want???

Reply