

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 21, 2023

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Anchored in Preparedness: Port of Hueneme Hosts Multi-Agency Emergency Trainings

[Port Hueneme, CA] — The Port of Hueneme is working with local fire departments on various training exercises to better prepare for a variety of emergency situations.



Fire Hose Box on a Vessel at the Port of Hueneme.

This week, crews from Ventura County, Oxnard and the Naval Base fire departments boarded the Wallenius Wilhelmsen (WW) car carrier vessel Oberon. This exercise is part of the ongoing effort to enhance awareness of Port and maritime operations to the local fire departments. The Oberon training focused on how to respond to emergencies involving electric and lithium powered vehicles and infrastructure. More than 370,000 cars come in through the Port of Hueneme on approximately 300 car carrier vessels annually, which accounts for a major part of the Port's core business as the top 6 auto port in the US.



Firefighters boarding the Oberon Vessel.

This summer the departments trained in a warehouse that was set to be demolished. The on-dock facility provided the fire agencies a space for real time ventilation, firefighting and rescue drills. This joint effort allowed crews to train and practice skill sets in a rare, perhaps once in a career warehouse structure of this caliber. The training was made possible through the Port's Area Maritime Security Committee.

“When I learned the warehouse was set to be demolished, I saw the opportunity and proposed it to our fire partners in late 2022 at a regional stakeholder meeting,” said Port of Hueneme Operations Manager Mike Morrison. “Port leadership supported the idea and the opportunity gained momentum in alignment with graduating fire academies and annual training requirements.”



Firefighters training at Port of Hueneme Warehouse.

The fire departments' key focus areas were ventilation of the commercial panelized roof, victim recovery, and door/window and interior structure removal.

Oxnard Fire Department Training Captain Nate LaRusso identified the commercial warehouse as a unique and very rare opportunity for training, and collaborated with Ventura County Battalion Chief Gene Fong to ensure all agencies throughout the county were able to participate in the training.

“This is a great example of the partnerships amongst community stakeholders and our continuing collaboration with the Port of Hueneme,” said VCFD Battalion Chief Gene Fong. “All of our truck, engine, and rescue ambulance companies had the opportunity to train in fireground operations on a commercial wharf terminal. This included using specialized ventilation and forcible entry equipment on a terminal building slated to be demolished. Such training keeps us prepared to respond to the next emergency and fortifies our ability to answer to the community’s diverse needs.”

“Our local community is our top priority,” said Jess Herrera, Oxnard Harbor District Board President. “We are proud to be able to support our local fire departments with a training space so that they are better prepared to keep our community safe.”



Firefighters reviewing the Oberon's Life Saving Plan.

The Port of Hueneme has MOUs and mutual aid agreements with outside agencies for emergency response. Having all agencies take part and come to the Port served multiple purposes including general Port familiarization, identifying obstacles, outlining response maps and improving tactics, all of which help in a swifter and safer response within the facility.

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About the Port of Hueneme *The Port of Hueneme is one of the most productive and efficient commercial trade gateways for niche cargo on the West Coast. Five locally elected Port Commissioners govern the Port. The Port consistently ranks among the top ten U.S. ports for automobiles and fresh produce. Port operations support the community by bringing \$2.2 billion in economic activity and creating 20,032 trade-related jobs. Trade through the Port of Hueneme generates more than \$173.2 million in direct and related state and local taxes, which fund vital community services. In 2017, the Port of Hueneme became the first port in California to become Green Marine certified and was voted the Greenest Port in the U.S. at the Green Shipping Summit.*

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