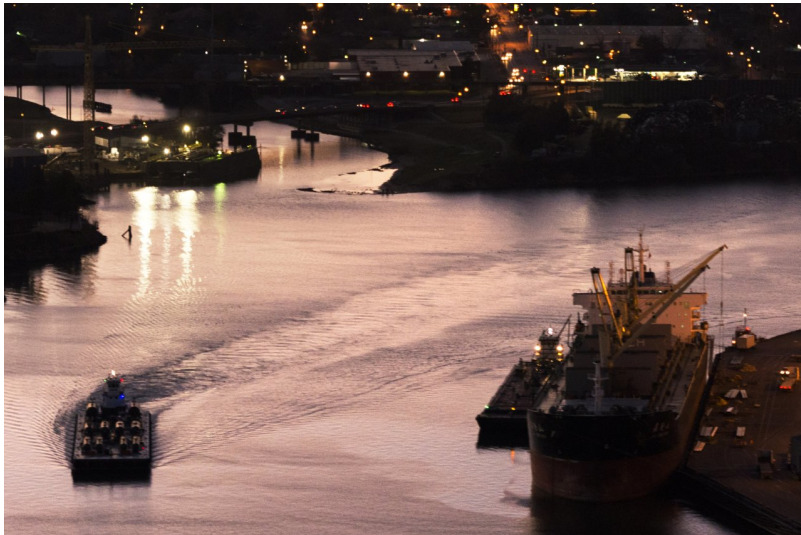


U.S.

# Port Houston Container Terminals to Resume Operations Friday

Port of Galveston 'back to normal operations' Friday



The Port of Houston, which ranks among the nation's busiest, is a major shipping hub for petroleum products and container cargo. PHOTO: SMILEY N. POOL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

*By Erica E. Phillips*

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The Port of Houston is reopening to ships Friday, a week after closing in advance of Hurricane Harvey.

The port, which ranks among the nation's busiest, is a major shipping hub for petroleum products and container cargo. The seaport and surrounding freight rail and highway infrastructure make up a critical link in U.S. supply chains, and as the storm raged many U.S. businesses were bracing for potentially widespread shocks to commerce.

In a notice to customers Thursday, officials said that there was no evidence of flooding on terminals and no visible damage to containers, cranes or other equipment. The apparatus providing power to refrigerated containers also appeared not to have been damaged, port officials said.

“Employees are on-site, facilities are back online, and we are ready to operate,” said Roger Guenther, the port’s executive director, in an emailed statement.

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Vessel schedules, posted to the port’s website, show the expected arrival of seven vessels Friday, including ships operated by Maersk Line, CMA CGM and MSC. More than a dozen ships that were scheduled to call Houston over the past five days had to divert elsewhere, according to the port’s announcement.

The neighboring Port of Galveston, a popular launching point for Caribbean cruises, also said normal operations would resume on Friday.

The closure interrupted what had been a banner year for Houston’s port. The city’s port is an early stop for ships passing through the Panama Canal, which was widened last summer to allow bigger vessels to pass through. Many retailers and manufacturers now bring in goods from Asia through Houston instead of the West Coast.

The U.S. Coast Guard is still restricting passage through the Houston Ship Channel to ships with 37-foot draft or less, and transits will be allowed only during daylight hours, port officials said. Upper portions of the channel remain closed.

“While urban search and rescue remains our top priority, we understand the importance of reopening ports and waterways, which are vital to the flow of goods and services throughout our nation,” U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Kevin D. Oditt said in an emailed statement.

Truck gates would be functional beginning at 7 a.m. Central Daylight Time Friday, officials said, though some lanes would be closed. Five more ships were expected to arrive Saturday, and more over the holiday weekend.

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