

AllCovered NEWS

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A weekly service for clients and friends of Allcovered.net and the Allen Insurance Group

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Monday, 11 April 2005 --- Edition #431

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AllCovered-NEWS

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SMALL BIZ – FRIENDLY CULTURE KEY TO RECRUITING

A high salary doesn't always lure top talent. A company's reputation as an employer also affects its ability to retain and recruit quality employees.

Job seekers take a variety of factors into consideration, including whether a company offers health benefits, flexible work schedules, child-care programs, professional enrichment opportunities, tuition reimbursement and more.

There are long-term benefits to catering to your internal customers -- your employees.

In a knowledge-based economy the wisdom, contacts, and know-how in your employees' brains are your company's biggest assets. Talented individuals are not afraid to accept better offers.

--- KEY BENEFITS TO ATTRACT BEST WORKERS ---

Job Stability:

Employees want to know they will have a stable job.

Atmosphere:

A friendly, joyful workplace that is clean and attractive.

Work-Life Balance:

Employees want a company that understands there is life away from the office, allowing reasonable flexibility to adjust work hours for family or personal matters.

Benefits:

Health, disability and flex-time are important. Extra benefits such as child-care are "icing on the cake," but will not overcome a company's reputation for not being a good place to work.

MORE: http://www.bizjournals.com/industries/business_services/human_resources/2005/03/28/louisville_story3.html?f=et152

SMALL BIZ – DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH INSURANCE?

--- Property – Business Interruption – Key Man ---

Business owners often are big losers when disaster strikes, notes Robert Hartwig, chief economist for the Insurance Information Institute.

At a bare minimum, businesses need to insure their properties and their inventory, and they should secure workers' compensation insurance if there are employees.

Even businesses that rent their buildings need to insure the space so that, in the event of a fire, flood or other disaster, the contents of the building will be covered. The property itself would be insured by the owner.

A more complicated insurance, but one well worth considering, is "Business Interruption Insurance."

If your street floods or the roof falls Business Interruption Insurance pays for some of the lost income while you get re-started. The payments from the insurance company would be "equivalent to sales minus expenses, plus some additional costs you might have, like extra rent to relocate and transporting inventory to a new location."

So-called "Key Man" insurance is life insurance the company takes on an important employee whose loss may hurt the company.

MORE: http://www.bizjournals.com/industries/banking_financial_services/insurance/2005/04/04/austin_focus6.html?f=et145

EU ECONOMY – SLOWER GROWTH: The European Commission cut back its 2005 euro area growth forecast for the to 1.6% (2.0% was forecast last October). Germany, Europe's biggest economy, weighed most heavily in the report; its GDP is now expected to grow at 0.8% this year, down from 1.6% in 2004. The European Union as a whole looks slightly better. For all 25 countries, growth is forecast at 2.0%, with the newly joined Baltic countries racing ahead: Latvia's GDP is forecast to grow by 7.2% this year

FUN BIZ – GOOGLE SHOWS OFF SAT MAPS: Online search engine Google unveils a new feature allowing you to zoom in on homes and businesses in the US using satellite images. You are directed to a map and can click a button for satellite.

MORE: <http://www.thedenverchannel.com/technology/4350950/detail.html?rss=den&psp=news>

>>>>>>> TRUCKING SECTION <<<<<<<<

AllCoveredNEWS - EASY TO READ & PRINT VERSION:

<http://www.allcovered.net/AC-News-PDF.htm>

TRUCKING – DIESEL RECORD AGAIN: The US national average retail price of a gallon of diesel set another record for the week ending April 4, up more than a nickel from the previous week's record price, to \$2.303. That is 65 cents more than the average a year ago.

MORE: <http://www.etrucker.com/apps/news/article.asp?id=46949>

TRUCKING – AGREEMENT ON INTERMODAL MAINTENANCE

The American Trucking Associations and intermodal equipment providers have agreed on federal legislation that would establish requirements for chassis maintenance.

The American Trucking Associations, the Ocean Carrier Equipment Management Association and the Association of American Railroads have accepted a way for sharing responsibility for maintenance, repair and inspection of intermodal equipment.

They are backing US House Bill 1296 which would make the “equipment controller” liable for all violations of Federal Motor Carrier Safety regulations, unless the violations are caused by a motor carrier or driver through negligence or willful misconduct.

MORE: <http://www.etrucker.com/apps/news/article.asp?id=46950>

TRUCKING - OO'S SQUARE OFF ON SURCHARGE BILL: According to Traffic World, major sectors of the transportation community are slugging it out over a provision in the House-passed version of the federal highway bill. The provision requires motor carriers, brokers and freight forwarders to impose a fuel surcharge if fuel prices exceed an adjustable benchmark. The money would be paid to whoever actually purchased the fuel, often the owner operators. Opponents include the US Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, the Retail Industry Leaders Association and Wal-Mart.

MORE: http://www.truckinginfo.com/news/news-detail.asp?news_id=54455

TRUCKING – FAST CARDS OK FOR BORDER CHECK: Beginning in 2008, US citizens will be required to show their passports when returning from Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean, but truckers who regularly cross the border will be able to show their Free and Secure Trade cards instead. The US Customs website explains [how to get a FAST card](#), while the US State Department website explains [how to get a passport](#).

MORE: <http://www.etrucker.com/apps/news/article.asp?id=46974>

TRUCKING – DRIVER SCREENING INTENSIFIES: See “Security” Section

TRUCKING – NAFTA TRUCK INSURANCE

US state officials will meet this week with Mexican and Canadian authorities to discuss insurance coverage for truckers.

California Insurance Commissioner John Geramendi and New Mexico Insurance Superintendent Erica Serna told reporters in Los Angeles Friday they would be taking part in NAFTA negotiations that will focus on insurance for cross-border truck traffic which is increasing.

Geramendi said current laws make policies from one nation worthless in another, which results in many drivers simply doing without insurance at all.

In addition, Mexico doesn't have workman's compensation coverage for drivers who are injured while driving in the United States. Another topic of discussion will be insurance coverage of truck cargo stolen by hijackers.

MORE: <http://washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/20050408-034745-9381r.htm>

SECURITY - NEW C-TPAT REGS TAKE EFFECT

As we reported last week, members of the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) have a new set of guidelines to follow to maintain their certifications.

US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) published new C-TPAT Importer Security Criteria, which require members to strengthen physical security for shipments, and verify their supply chain partners are taking steps to do the same.

"As the program has grown, so has our need for more clearly defined security criteria to establish the minimum, baseline security expectations for membership in this voluntary, incentives-based program," says CBP Commissioner Robert Bonner.

Importers are required to properly seal and maintain shipping containers, using a high-security seal that meets or exceeds the PAS ISO 17712 standards, and verify the integrity of the container via inspection.

Members also need an employee identification system, a pre-screening system for new employees, and have procedures in place for challenging and removing unauthorized visitors.

The rules also spell out criteria for container storage, physical access controls, documentation processing, accurate manifesting and reconciliation, and security training.

Current C-TPAT members have 60 days (ending May 26) to meet the container security, physical security and physical access criteria.

By July 26, members must address internal security elements, including personnel security, procedural security, information technology security, and establish a security training and threat awareness program.

By Sept. 26, members have to meet the business partner requirements, pushing the security enhancements back into their supply chains, from the point of stuffing to point of arrival.

MORE: www.cbp.gov

MORE: <http://www.frontlinetoday.com/frontline/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=154576>

SECURITY – DRIVER SCREENING INTENSIFIES

In a poll of Truckload Carrier Association members, carriers plan to address safety performance in 2005 through increased driver screening. Screening followed closely by improved driver retention, and the integration of safety in hiring, firing and benefits compensation.

A \$25,000 accident to a carrier with a two percent profit margin results in the operator needing to generate an additional \$1.25 million in revenue to pay for the losses, according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

MORE: http://www.truckinginfo.com/news/news-detail.asp?news_id=54487

SECURITY – TSA TO BE CUT

In a rare reaction for any government, an agency that has not performed up to what would be expected in private enterprise, is to be cut, not given more money.

The Transportation Security Administration, once the flagship agency in the nation's \$20-Billion effort to protect air travelers, is now targeted for sharp cuts in its high-profile mission.

The latest sign came when the Bush administration asked David Stone, the TSA's director, to step down in June, according to aviation and government sources.

The TSA has been plagued by operational missteps, public relations blunders and criticism of its performance from both the public and legislators. Its "No Fly" list has mistakenly snared senators. Its security screeners have been arrested for stealing from luggage, and its passenger pat-downs have set off an outcry from women.

The agency will likely become just manager of airport security screeners -- a responsibility that itself could diminish as private screening companies increasingly seek a comeback at US airports.

MORE: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35333-2005Apr7.html?nav=rss_business

SECURITY – STRUCTURING DHS

As lawmakers and the Bush administration begin to review policy changes at the fledgling Homeland Security Department, the Congressional Research Service is offering a playbook of options for drafting an authorization and spending bill.

The CRS report suggested lawmakers accelerate the implementation of the Transportation Workers' Identification Credential card, which aims to control access to vulnerable areas at airports, seaports and other transit areas by applying a single standard for credentials to an estimated 5 million transportation workers. The program is one year behind schedule now.

MORE: <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0405/040405cdpm2.htm>

>>>>> AIR & OCEAN SECTION <<<<<<

OCEAN – KEEPING CARGO MOVING

The United States is importing more and exporting less than ever before. The US trade deficit, the gap between imports and exports, reached a record \$666 billion, up more than 25% from 2003.

This year, a turbocharger kicked in: A longstanding system of quotas on textiles and garments expired, ending restrictions on China.

The results are stark: Apparel imported from China jumped nearly four-fold in January.

In Seattle containerized cargo was up 54% in January compared to 2003.

Ports and shoreside infrastructure was overwhelmed last year leading to long delays for goods into US west coast ports.

This year likely will be worse.

New longshoremen are being added, but their union says not nearly enough of them to handle the volume of imports.

"The amount of increase in cargo is faster than the increase in infrastructure," says a spokesman for the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad forecasts an 18% increase in cargo this year.

Experts in trade continue to say if west coast ports, railroads and highway construction all work together imports through their ports could double in 15 years... but no new highways are planned, port space is limited, and railroads expand as they can.

Some shippers have started rerouting Asian cargo to Savannah, New York and other eastern ports via all-water routes through the Panama and Suez canals.

Although such routing is theoretically about a week slower than bringing a container into the west coast and railing it east... at least cargo is more likely to arrive on time.

Getting goods delivered on schedule is crucial, as stores and factories rely on supply chains to provide just-in-time delivery to keep sales and production lines humming.

New megaships, such as the 8,000-container Vancouver that docked in Seattle last month, are 30% bigger than the previous generation of ships. And 10,000-TEU ships are on their way. While efficient for shippers, the big ships can overwhelm docks and railyards, causing days of delay.

MORE: http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/business/technology/2002229122_portofseattle03.html

OCEAN - US PORT BACKLOG

Not long after the trading rules with China were relaxed, the bottlenecks at American ports started.

Since January, when the remaining US quotas on textiles were lifted for some developing countries, China exporters have sent tons of goods to the United States faster than they can be unloaded.

So far this year, US imports of textile and apparel products from China has increased more than 63% from last year, according to preliminary data released by the U.S Commerce Department last week.

From florists to manufacturers to frozen foods exporters, business owners say they are seeing longer delivery times for some products. That, combined with higher fuel costs, is making business more challenging, and some companies are already passing the added costs on to customers.

Wait times are up. For example, Electronic Systems Protection of Zebulon, North Carolina, which makes surge protectors for the copier industry, gets 90% of its components from China. It has had to adjust its inventory to deal with the slowdown. "Typically, something that used to take eight to 10 weeks lead time, now takes 12 to 14 weeks."

MORE: <http://newsobserver.com/business/story/2289943p-8668771c.html>

OCEAN – PMA FORECASTS 14% VOLUME HIKE: The Pacific Maritime Association is forecasting that US West Coast ports will handle 14% more cargo this year. "The forecast was based on the individual projections of PMA members -- domestic and international carriers and stevedores," according to the Long Beach port's monthly newsletter.

MORE: <http://www.americanshipper.com/frm2001.asp?Target=NewsFrame.asp?news=20732>

OCEAN – PACIFIC CAPACITY UP 18%: Container shipping lines increased their total eastbound transpacific capacity 18% to about 299,900 TEUs a week in the year to April 1, according to a report published Thursday by ComPairData, the global liner-shipping database. Pacific carriers are expected to announce the start of more transpacific services in the next few months, to cater for peak eastbound volumes in the summer/fall season.

MORE: <http://www.americanshipper.com/frm2001.asp?Target=NewsFrame.asp?news=20764>

OCEAN – INDIAN TRAFFIC UP 14%: Throughput at India's 13 major ports rose 11.3% to 384 million metric tons in the fiscal year ended March 31, according to an official statement. The increase was the highest in a decade. Container traffic at the major ports crossed 4 million TEUs.

MORE: <http://www.joc.com/20050408/sections/ocean/w60387.asp>

OCEAN – STRIKE THREATENS FINNISH PORTS: The Finnish Transport Workers' Union is threatening Finnish seaports with a strike if no progress is made on contract talks with harbor workers. The strike by stevedores would shut down all Finnish harbours on April 15. A ban on overtime came into force on Friday.

MORE: <http://www.yle.fi/news/left/id9577.html>

OCEAN – E/SP & MAGELLAN CARRIERS HIKE SURCHARGE: Members of the European/South Pacific & Magellan Freight Conference, a carrier group in the Europe/West Coast of South America trade, will increase the Panama Canal surcharge to \$125 per 20-foot-container, effective May 1.

MORE: <http://www.americanshipper.com/frm2001.asp?Target=NewsFrame.asp?news=20694>

OCEAN – MAERSK HIKES DEMURRAGE: Maersk Sealand announced plans to boost US demurrage charges to \$225 per day for dry cargo, \$400 per day for refrigerated cargo and \$275 per day for other types of equipment, effective May 1 on shippers for late pick up of cargo at its port and rail terminals and inland container yard depots.

MORE: <http://www.americanshipper.com/frm2001.asp?Target=NewsFrame.asp?news=20747>

OCEAN – CHINA SHIPPING PLANS 8 NEW SERVICES: Fast-growing China Shipping Container Lines is planning to start another eight liner services this year, as it takes delivery of 21 newly built containerships. These will include the route from Asia to the US West Coast, from Asia to South America,

from South East Asia to Europe, from Asia to the Mediterranean, and from South East Asia to Australia.
MORE: <http://www.americanshipper.com/frm2001.asp?Target=NewsFrame.asp?news=20763>

OCEAN – COSCO GROWS: China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) has bought China Ocean Shipping Tally Company (COSTACO), in a move expected to sharpen the competitiveness of the country's largest shipping firm. "The merger has extended our business chain and also made us both more competitive," COSCO President Wei Jiafu told China Daily. Wei said he would also up the firm's shipping capacity across the globe. He said the overall shipping capacity of the company's container carriers will rise to 800,000 TEUs (twenty-foot-equivalent unit) by 2010 to enter the world's top three. It currently sits seventh.

MORE: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-04/09/content_2806624.htm

AIR - PROJECT AIR CARGO GAINS

The project cargo business is not for the faint hearted.

Outsize air freight operators always seem to be working against the clock - and that can just be to get access to heavylift charter capacity, let alone actually moving the cargo.

The rebuilding effort in Afghanistan, ongoing military operations in Iraq and humanitarian efforts in Africa are taking up huge chunks of project air cargo capacity. And what by now was supposed to be a thriving, commercial reconstruction in Iraq remains a dangerous, war-torn situation in which delivering outsize cargo is a risky proposition.

The spot market for outsized lifts remains tight and unyielding.

The 111-ton capacity Antonov AN-124 is the recognized workhorse of the project cargo business.

"Although Iraq has a fully serviceable port in the south of the country it is still very difficult and dangerous to move goods up country. This is why we are being called on to fly directly into such places as Baghdad and Mosul in the north," says Graham Pearce, senior vice-president commercial at Antonov.

Paul Hughes, director energy and projects, Europe and Middle East for EGL Eagle Global Logistics, says the main traffic lanes for energy related project cargo remains out of the US to the Middle East. "But what we are beginning to see is a significant shift away from the Middle East, particularly with the development of gas to liquefied products projects, which are taking place in such diverse markets as West Africa and Brazil."

--- AN 225 ---

Antonov Airlines has one project cargo ace up its sleeve: it is the only outsized operator to fly the mega-sized AN-225, which offers more than 200 tons of lift. The carrier says it has clocked about 500 flying hours with the aircraft in the last year.

"The AN-225 is used sparingly for dedicated big lifts," says Graham Pearce. "We would not use it to fly what potentially is one-and-a-half AN-124 loads."

Right now there is one AN-225. A second AN-225 airframe exists, but it would take about two years to complete it if demand requires.

MORE: http://www.aircargoworld.com/features/0405_3.htm

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AIR – US AIRLINES LOOK TO CARGO FOR PROFIT

"What we're trying to at a macro level is maximize the belly space with whatever product that may be, whether it's mail, whether it's freight, whether it's fish," says Randy Richards, America West's vice president of cargo sales and service.

In an industry hampered by high fuel prices, low fares and too many seats, extra cargo revenue is drawing attention.

"Belly cargo, if it's handled right, can be very lucrative," says Mike Boyd of Boyd Group, aviation consultants. "It's all incremental revenue. Most of the cargo is not time-specific. If the airplane to New York fills up with luggage, it's 'We'll get it on the next airplane' in most cases."

"The normal type of airplane that's used to carry passengers in the United States is a narrow-body airplane. There's not a lot of space, plus they're trying to turn the airplanes around quickly . . . there's not a lot of time for handling freight or making sure it gets on the right flight," says Robert Dahl, of the Air Cargo Management.

US international airlines generate less than 5% of their revenue from cargo.

In Europe Lufthansa, Air France and BA receive at least 10% of their revenue from cargo.

In Asia cargo makes up 45% of their revenue.

MORE: <http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/index.php?sty=38985>

AIR – GAIN FOR HK AIR CARGO: Hong Kong's main air cargo terminal said it handled 3% more cargo in the first three months of 2005 as exports rose.

MORE: <http://www.joc.com/lede/20050408/sections/air/w21632.asp>

TRADE – FREIGHT TRANSPORT PLAN FOR EASTERN EUROPE

An ambitious transport project set to provide a high-speed goods link across Eastern Europe later this year will form the backbone of the EU's transport integration plan, making the region a more attractive base for food producers and suppliers.

"Operation Polcorridor," run by the pan-European research and development group Eureka, has been selected by the EU to form the base of its Reorient project aimed at integrating member states' fragmented railway networks.

The move gives top-level recognition to Polcorridor, which should have Europe's most advanced transport corridor, running between Scandinavia and the Balkans, in place within the next year. The final Polcorridor system will be made up of three parts: sea-land connections from Sweden, Finland and Norway to hubs in Poland; a regularly scheduled block train – the Blue Shuttle – linking Szczecin/Swinoujscie and Gdansk in Poland with Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest; and existing land connections to destinations in most of south and south-eastern Europe.

MORE: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=59230-freight-transport-plan>

TRADE - WILL LOGISTICS MOVE FROM HK TO CHINA?: Ports in Hong Kong are stacked with ocean containers filled with products made in China and waiting for ships to take them to overseas destinations. But ports and airports in China also have boosted capacity, raising question of whether Hong Kong's storied transport and logistics business - what many consider the life's blood of the city - could go the same way as the bargain hunters and the manufacturers... moving their base of operations to southern China.

MORE: http://www.aircargoworld.com/features/0405_1.htm

TRADE – DP WANTS EXEL?: Market speculation continues that logistics group Exel is on Deutsche Post's shopping list. Deutsche Post has announced plans to seek shareholder authority to issue nearly Euro-5-Billion worth of shares for acquisition currency.

MORE: http://www.sharecast.com/cgi-bin/sharecast/story.cgi?story_id=459182

TRADE – AGREEMENT ON INTERMODAL MAINTENANCE: See "Trucking" Section

(These are shared by readers – Please share yours. Thanks. Mike)

REDNECK TIP OF THE WEEK

Next time you are too drunk to drive, walk to the nearest pizza shop, place an order, and when they go to deliver it, catch a ride home with them.

DARWIN AWARD

Named in honor of Charles Darwin who gave us the theory of survival of the fittest.

The following mind-boggling attempt at a crime spree in Washington appeared to be the robber's first (and last), due to his lack of a previous record of violence, and his terminally stupid choices:

1. His target was H&J Leather & Firearms, a gun shop specializing in handguns.
2. The shop was full of customers - firearms customers.
3. To enter the shop, the robber had to step around a marked police car parked at the front door.
4. A uniformed officer was standing at the counter, having coffee before work.

Upon seeing the officer, the would-be robber announced a hold-up, and fired a few wild shots from a .22 target pistol. The officer and a clerk promptly returned fire, the police officer with a 9mm Glock 17, the clerk with a .50 Desert Eagle, assisted by several customers who also drew their guns, several of whom also fired.

The robber was pronounced dead at the scene by Paramedics. Crime scene investigators located 47 expended cartridge cases in the shop. The subsequent autopsy revealed 23 gunshot wounds.

Ballistics identified rounds from 7 different weapons.

No one else was hurt in the exchange of fire.

TOWN BRATS

A couple had the two little boys, ages 8 and 10, who were excessively mischievous. They were always getting into trouble and their parents knew that if any mischief occurred in their town, their sons were probably involved.

The boys' mother heard that a clergyman in town had been successful in disciplining children, so she asked if he would speak with her boys. The clergyman agreed, but asked to see them individually.

So, the mother sent her 8-year-old first, in the morning, with the older boy to see the clergyman in the afternoon.

The clergyman, a huge man with a booming voice, sat the younger boy down and asked him sternly, "Where is God?"

The boy's mouth dropped open, but he made no response, sitting there with his mouth hanging open, wide-eyed.

So, the clergyman repeated the question in an even sterner tone, "Where is God!!?"

Again, the boy made no attempt to answer.

So, the clergyman raised his voice even more and shook his finger in the boys face and bellowed, "WHERE IS GOD?"

The boy screamed and bolted from the room, ran directly home and dove into his closet, slamming the door behind him.

When his older brother found him in the closet, he asked, "What happened?"

The younger brother, gasping for breath, replied, "We are in BIG trouble this time, dude. God is missing - and they think WE did it!"

If you have curious or interesting or funny or thoughtful items that might be good in "Just For Fun", Email them to mike.miller@allcovered.net . Thanks.

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The Economist = <http://www.economist.com>
Financial Times of London = <http://www.ft.com>
Journal of Commerce = <http://www.joc.com>
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