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## U.S. volume, consumer sales up in May

Container volume at the Southern California ports rose moderately in May, though imports were stronger than overall volume.

Imports rose 5.5 percent to 360,969 TEUs at the Port of Los Angeles, and improved 4 percent to 275,100 TEUs, at the Port of Long Beach.

Los Angeles' total volume rose 0.5 percent to 692,933 TEUs, and Long Beach increased 2.3 percent to 536,681 TEUs. Los Angeles saw a 20.9 percent drop in empty export containers, while Long Beach export empties rose 8.1 percent.

U.S. import volume rose 8.8 percent in May, according to trade intelligence firm Zepol Corp.

Meanwhile, retail sales fell in May for the first time in 10 months, according to U.S. Commerce Department figures released this week.

The drop in spending came "as consumers grew increasingly apprehensive about the economic recovery and pulled back on their spending, the Retail Industry Leaders Association said in a statement.

Monthly retail sales figures for May dipped 0.2 percent from April but were 7.7 percent higher than in May 2010. Retail sales, excluding auto sales, were up 0.3 percent over the previous month and 8.2 percent over May 2010.

"Steep declines in auto and auto-related sales, compounded by increases in fuel prices exacerbated consumer malaise in May," RILA said. "Home improvement retailers saw the largest gains in May with a 1.2 percent increase over the previous month and a 7 percent increase over May 2010."



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