

Korean Boxship Crossing North Pacific Reports Lost and Damaged Containers



SM Line reports 115 containers were lost and damaged as its vessel was sailing in the North Pacific (SM Line file photo)

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South Korea's SM Line issued a customer alert on March 5 reporting that one of its vessels has experienced damaged and lost containers in a Pacific storm. The *SM Portland* (51,314 dwt) has resumed its voyage bound for Vancouver where it will be inspected by Canadian authorities.

"Due to heavy rolling by the inclement weather, unfortunately, it caused cargo damage, including container loss, collapse, and damage of 115 containers," SM advised. Customers are being instructed to check their documents to determine if they might have had boxes onboard the vessel which had called in China and South Korea before departing for Vancouver where it was due to arrive on March 10.

The ship, the *SM Portland*, has a capacity of 4,228 TEU and is 856 feet (261 meters) in length. It was built in 2009 and acquired by SM Line in 2021. The company reports it encountered severe winter weather with strong winds near the Bering Sea. AIS signals show the vessel changing course early on March 4 and resuming its crossing on March 5. SM Line reports the vessel had slowed and adjusted course for safety.

When the vessel arrives off Vancouver, the line reports there will be an investigation by Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard before it is permitted to berth. SM Line warns customers that it expects schedule delays.

SM Line was started in 2017 as a niche carrier and the following year, 2017, it launched service to North America. The company continues its Pacific routes in cooperation with the larger Korean carrier HMM.

This incident comes more than four years after one of the worst container loss events happened in the North Pacific in November 2020 on the *ONE Apsus*. The vessel also encountered heavy weather resulting in the loss of over 1,800 containers and damage to many more boxes that remained on deck. Maersk experienced a similar issue with its container ships *Maersk Essen* and *Maersk Eindhoven*, both of which also suffered container losses at sea on the Pacific that same winter season.

The heavy losses in 2020-2021 prompted new initiatives in the industry to address dangerous rolling. The shipping companies were advised to enhance training for their crews and new technologies were developed to help monitor and alert crew to potentially dangerous conditions.

The World Shipping Council in its 2024 annual report highlighted the industry's success in reducing losses with its data showing just 221 containers were lost at sea in 2023 out of 250 million transported. The IMO also moved in 2024 to tighten the rules requiring reporting of container losses.