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**FAQ**

**PIERS Knowledge**

Q. Where does PIERS get its data?

A. All US import data is sourced directly through an data feed from US Customs and Border Protection. The majority of export shipments are also sourced from US CBP, either through data feeds including AES and DIS or through paper filings gathered in Customs offices at ports across the U.S. PIERS also obtains some data directly from carriers in order to supplement this process.

Q. What's a TEU?

A. A unit used to describe the size of a cargo container. 1 twenty-foot equivalent (TEU) container is 20 feet long; a forty-foot long container is 2 TEU. The TEU unit is used through the maritime and transportation industries to describe and measure vessel capacities, transportation activity, and trade flows.

Q. What's a House/Master Bill of Lading?

A. A document that establishes the terms of a contract between a shipper and a transportation company. The Bill of Lading (BOL) typically includes cargo and billing information and directs the actions of personnel all along the route. When transport involves intermediaries such as NVOCCs, master bill refers to the document issued by the carrier physically transporting the cargo to the NVOCC. One or more house bills may be issued for the same transaction, which establish the terms of contract between the NVOCC and the cargo owner. For imports, PIERS has access to both house and master bills, and will combine data elements from both to provide the most accurate and detailed record. On exports only master bills are publicly available.

Q. Why are VIN numbers not included for all vessels carrying cars?

A. Some manifests include the VIN numbers within the commodity descriptions which allows the information to be available within PIERS products. However, some manifests list VINs in the "marks and fields" section, which PIERS does not have access to.

Q. Why does it say "order" in the company and/or consignee field?

A. U.S. Companies have the right to request confidentiality from U.S. Customs. When granted, Customs redacts the information for Shipper, Consignee, and Notify Party from the bill of lading file they send to PIERS. PIERS uses the word "Order" as a place holder in those cases.

Q. How do you calculate estimated value?

A. The estimated value field is a PIERS estimate of the value of a shipment based on various factors, it is not derived from any of the declared values of the shipments, as the declared values by CBP (US Customs) are not publicly available.

Q. How do you calculate the TEUS field?

A. PIERS uses individual container lengths to calculate TEUs on shipments. For cases where multiple commodities are shipped on the same bill of lading, we will use individual weights in order to portion out the TEUs among the commodities. Furthermore, PIERS TEU calculation identifies cases where the same container movement is associated with multiple bills (a consolidated shipment). In this case the TEUs are further divided according to weight among the associated bills and their commodities. See the examples below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bill | Containers | Commodities | TEU |
| 1 | CNTR1234567 (40 foot), CNTR7654321 (20 foot) | Shoes (30 tons) | 3 |
| 2 | CNTR5555555 (40 foot) | Mens Shirts (15 tons) | 1.5 |
| 2 | CNTR5555555 (40 foot) | Cotton Towels (5 tons) | 0.5 |
| 3\* | CNTR1111111 (20 foot) | Beef (8 tons) | 0.5 |
| 4\* | CNTR1111111 (20 foot) | Poultry (8 tons) | 0.5 |

\*Note that TEUs will only be divided up if the bills are referring to the same container movement, as determined by dates, vessel and ports.

20 and 40 foot containers account for nearly all containerized maritime trade, however for other rarely used container lengths such as 53 foot containers, our calculation will use the length in feet divided by 20.

**PIERS Enterprise Visualization**

Q. Within a market how do I display my high level performance?

A. On the Landing Page, users can select the market and parameters; they can view market share and performance. You will see your high level performance throughout your business

Q. Within a market, how do I display my competition’s high level performance?

A. On the Landing Page, users can select the market and parameters; they can view market share and performance. To view competitor’s performance, simply select them as the focus carrier

Q. Within a market, how do I display my high level performance against a carrier/carriers?

A. On the Landing Page, focus attention onto the Top Carrier Rankings at the bottom left and you will notice who has the highest market share within the determined market.

Q. Within a market, how do I display top trade lanes and my participation within those trade lanes?

A. On the Landing Page, focus your attention on the Top Trade Lanes on the Landing Page to see your market share within a trade lane

Q. Within a market how do I display top trade lanes and my competitions participation in those trade lanes?

A. On the landing page, switch focus carrier to whichever competitor you would like to view and see their market share and participation in each trade lane

Q. Within a market, how do I display top key commodities and my participation within those commodities?

A. On the landing page, focus your attention on the Top Commodities on the bottom right. It will display the top commodities and your market share in each

Q. Within a market, how do I display top key commodities and my competitions participation in those trade lanes?

 A. On the landing page, switch the focus carrier to whomever you would like to view. Focus your attention onto the bottom right; it will display their top commodities and their market share in each.

Q. How do I export the data I selected?

A. Exporting data is only available for sales leads tab. If you wish to see the list of customers in a table format, please select the export icon on the bottom of the screen and select how you would like to download. Our recommendation for data is to always use our Data Query Tool to access large amounts of data.

Q. How do I display volume over a time period for a specific commodity around the world?

A. On the Trade Lane Analysis page set the Us Coast and Region to All. This will allow you to view the data around the globe. You can then focus your attention to any commodity you would like and select it to determine who owns the most market share, where it is being shipped from and where it is going.

Q. How do I display participation in my book of business or other carrier’s book of business?

A. On the Sales Lead page, select your business as the Focus Carrier and set the US Coast and Region to determine your market area. Once you have done that you will see a list of companies displayed on the left hand side. If you utilize the slide bar that says FC Market Share you can set a market share parameter. If you want to see which customers only use your services within a market, simply slide the bar to only show 100%. If you want to do the same but for a competitor, simply change the Focus carrier to whomever you would like to see.

Q. How do I display who a company is using to ship a specific commodity

A. On the Sales Lead page, select your business as the Focus Carrier and set the US Coast and Region to determine your market area. Once you have done that you will see a commodity listing. Select which commodities you would like to focus on and then you can view which customers are shipping this commodity.

Q. How do I display what the top trade lane a customer is using to ship a commodity?

A. On Company Profiles page, select the market parameters at the top. Then type which company you would like to view. Select that company and select which commodity you would like to view. You will see the chart dynamically change to show you which trade lanes are being utilized for that commodity.

**PIERS Enterprise Data Query Tool**

Q. I used to have a separate page to select the fields that I want to download, where do I select the fields I want in my output report?

A. The new product consolidates the pages you use to build your report. On the right hand portion of the “Build Query” page, you will see the options for fields that are available for you to download in the “Output Column Selection” section. The selections on the left side will filter your result set and the selections on the right will determine which columns are included in your report.

Q. I used to use a “lookup” table to narrow down my search selection. Where did the lookup tables go?

A. Through user experience testing and review of report logs, PIERS has uncovered that majority of our users execute reports with prior report knowledge. Therefore having lookup tables slows the user's experience. In most cases, users know exactly what they are looking for and just need to access it quickly. PIERS has removed lookup tables and replaced with reference tables that customers can now access quickly and easily. On the slim occasion that a user is trying to derive a specific vessel or commodity, PIERS suggests that users download a larger dataset. Utilizing the newly added speed to the tool, users can now access data 92% faster. PIERS recommends users to download a larger scope of data and filter with additional analytics or software (Access, Excel or internal Databases)

Q. Why can I only download .CSV files? Can I download a .MDB file?

A. The CSV reports can be quickly imported into all types of analytics software. The CSV files output by the tool are comma delimited with double quotes (") as string identifiers. These files should open automatically in Microsoft Excel. To import to Access, follow the instructions below. Similar steps can also be used to manually import the data to Excel or similar tools.

* From Access, select Open File…
* Change file type to “All Files” or “Text files”
* Select the .csv report you want to open.
* The Link Text Wizard will open and prompt you to choose Delimited or Fixed Width. Choose Delimited and proceed to Next.
* You should select Comma as the delimiter (usually this is the default). Then select “ as the text qualifier. Usually the default is none. You will probably also want to mark the checkbox for First Row Contains Field Names.

Q. Why is there no specific field for me to download Unit of Measure (U\_M)?

A. Since U\_M is always associated with the “Quantity” field we combined the fields and they will always be downloaded together when you select the “Quantity and Units” field.

Q. In the “Advanced Search Section” there is an option to download “US Company TEU Volume”. What does that mean?

A. Query users often like to filter out very low volume shippers (or likewise may want to exclude very high volume shippers). This advanced option allows you to filter your results based on the number of TEUs a company has imported or exported over the past year. This filter is applied to the company’s shipment activity in the year preceding our most recent fully certified month. The filter uses the total TEUs for that company nationwide for all regions – it does not adjust based on the filters you have applied to your query.

Q. In the “Carrier and NVOCC” section I see the option to select “Validated Data Only”, what does that mean?

A. Our new tool provides you the option to see the most recent data that we have available in our database. All of our data accessible in this tool has been through a thorough data cleansing and standardization process. Our final validation step is to compare date, port, and vessel information from individual bills of lading to US Customs vessel logs in order to standardize these data elements. If you have the “Validated Data Only” box selected, you will only see data that has been validated against these logs. Because US Customs vessel logs are released on a different schedule than the bill of lading data, the most recent data received will often not yet be validated against the logs, particularly for import shipments within the previous seven days. Unchecking this box will give you access to this unvalidated data, which may contain variations in sailing dates since the numerous bills on each voyage have not yet been standardized to the vessel log information. . If having the most recent data available is important to your search, unchecking this box will be helpful. Validated Data Only will always be checked by default.