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Unicold Corporation opens at the Port of Oakland

By Robert L. Wallack, AJOT

This past April, Unicold Corporation officially opened their new refrigerated consolidation and trans load facility at the Port of Oakland. The twenty thousand square foot truck and rail accessed building allows the movement of more chilled and frozen food products to growing markets in Hawaii, neighboring islands, The Mariana Islands and Asia. The Oakland operation is one part of Unicold's United States West Coast cold food exporting business.

In 1962, Unicold Corporation began distributing frozen and refrigerated foods to the people of Hawaii. Unicold's main Honolulu warehouse for its customers is the largest refrigerated food warehouse in Hawaii. It has 3.4 million cubic feet of refrigerated space and is centrally located minutes from Honolulu (Matson Navigation) piers and the Honolulu International Airport. The Honolulu warehouse has 78 container portals for regularly scheduled consolidated shipments to the island of Oahu and for container-on-barge weekly shipments to Molokai, Kauai, Maui and the Big Island.

In 1978, Unicold began using the Port of Oakland as a base for its container freight services of frozen food products from United States production sources to customer destinations in Hawaii

Guam, Saipan, and the Far East. In 1992 Unicold started operating out of a smaller facility near the new modern one. The company's Container Services Division includes Seattle, Washington and Los Angeles, California facilities as well as trans-Pacific refrigerated shipments.

Rene Moreno, Oakland Division Manager, Unicold Corporation told the American Journal of Transportation how the company moves cold food products from source to Westbound overseas destinations. "Unicold handles refrigerated shipments for companies such as Con Agra, Dot Foods, Excel, Farmland, Hormel, IBP, Kraft Foods, Schreiber Cheese, and Tyson just to name a few," he said.

Most frozen food that can be found in a grocery store or in a home freezer are more than likely shipped through Unicold's new facility for Hawaiian consumers. Hawaii shipments are the largest portion of the company's Oakland business. In fact, seventy percent of the business is freight consolidation to Hawaii.

Freight arrives at the new facility by truck or rail car and is shipped by refrigerated containers on Matson and Horizon Lines vessels. Thirty percent of the freight is transloaded, exporting of beef and poultry to Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, and The Mariana Islands. Various ocean carriers are used to service those destinations.

The new refrigerated building is conveniently situated by the Port of Oakland's two near-dock transcontinental railroad companies: Union Pacific (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF). Two new rail spurs that can accommodate 12 rail cars are on one side of the new Unicold

transload warehouse. Unicold has a reciprocal switch agreement with UP and BNSF. The other side of the new Unicold building has 30 container doors for handling their transloading requirements.

THE OVERWEIGHT ROUTE

Iowa Beef Processors (IBP) ships frozen beef and fresh pork from South Dakota, Iowa, and Nebraska from their slaughterhouses and warehouse services by rail or truck. Tyson Foods of Springdale, Arkansas ships poultry which is also transloaded for Hawaii and the Mariana Islands consumers. Rail and truckloads of frozen and chilled food; are transported, transloaded and exported. Unicold accepts 53 foot over the road refrigerated trailers from the Midwest. Larger shipping

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volumes handled by Unicold help to reduce customer costs.

The Port of Oakland accommodates the new facility with their overweight route. Reinforced roadways throughout the Port confirm can handle containers and chassis up to 95,000 pounds gross, which exceed city street weight limits. "By using the overweight route, the container loads can be maximized, holding more products, and reduce the number of truck trips," according to a Port of Oakland spokesperson.

The continuous flow of shipments to Hawaii amount to millions of pounds of food. Frozen and chilled foods are monitored throughout the shipment whether by truck, rail, or the ocean carriers.

Prior to departure, Thermo King and Carrier brand refrigeration units are controlling temperatures of trailers docked outside the new facility. The temperatures of each container are monitored for the Pacific voyage to the Port of Honolulu. On arrival, the temperature monitor is plugged into a personal computer (PC) which prints out any variance in the temperature.

Whether Northern California ice cream or frozen seafoods for grocery stores, the frozen food needs of food service companies and restaurants, or yeast for bread manufacturers, or even fresh beef or pork for the military, Unicold Corporation delivers "just in time" to Hawaii, Guam, Saipan, The Mariana Islands and Asia.