Panama Canal Restricting Transit Due to Low Water Levels

by Danielle Leonard - Wednesday, April 17, 2019

The dry season is lowering canal water levels and has caused the Panama Canal Authority to impose a transit draft restriction on the canal’s Neopanamax locks, effective April 30. This restriction will reduce the draft to 13.41 meters Tropical Fresh Water (TFW).

This means that if a vessel exceeds 13.41 meters TFW, after April 30, they will be required to off-load cargo to be allowed transit.

According to the JOC, “while the authority has imposed its draft restriction on the canal’s enlarged locks, which are able to handle ships with up to 14,800 TEU in capacity, the old locks, which are limited to ships with capacities of up to 5,000 TEU, remain unaffected.

A Standard Draft for Neopanamax Locks

15.24 meters (50.0 feet) TFW

Draft Restriction Effective April 30
13.41 meters (44.0 feet) TFW

How This May Impact You

These draft restrictions could cause vessels to limit the amount of containers they can carry per voyage. In turn, this may lead to capacity issues which could make containers roll to later vessels, causing delays to cargo departure. Space will also be restricted for heavy or overweight containers, and in a worst case scenario, bookings may be rejected or forced to move on alternate service strings that do not pass through the Panama Canal, and these sailings may have longer transit time.

If you have questions or want to know if your shipments will be impacted by this, reach out to your Mohawk customer service representative.