

Ship to shore: Logistics huge in Green Bay



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(Photo: USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin)

GREEN BAY - Transportation and logistics may bring to mind long-haul truck drivers and the long trains that block Green Bay traffic on a daily basis. But don't forget the region's original transportation lifeline: The Port of Green Bay. Fur and lumber, the original industries that helped build the port two centuries ago, may have gone the way of Fort Howard, but they've been replaced by coal, salt, cement, oil, limestone and other materials. In recent years, maritime commerce has experienced a resurgence that local logistics industry officials expect will continue to grow. Port of Green Bay Director Dean Haen said the port plans to undertake strategic planning in the coming years to guide physical expansion, which should attract more industry. As it does, Haen said demand for skilled labor, both on the shore and on the water, will grow beyond the roughly 800 jobs the port currently supports.

“Fuel costs will rise. Traffic congestion will rise. That will drive more things to the water,” Haen said. “And as more things are shipped on the water, you get more high-value products. And that means more logistics, more transportation and more freight-forwarding jobs.”

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Companies like KK Integrated Logistics, which has operations in Green Bay, Marinette, and Manitowoc, has a need for stevedores, forklift operators, crane operators, local truck drivers and heavy equipment operators. Green Bay-based RGL Logistics needs forklift operators and truck drivers, and even offers a forklift training school for inexperienced workers looking for a change.

RGL CEO Bob Johnson said he anticipates the company expanding its port operations in the next 18 months to two years. With it, he said will come a demand for more workers with a broad skill set.

“There’s some very high-skilled labor that goes into it,” he said. “It depends on the type of ship.”

And not just more jobs are in demand, but jobs that pay well and only require training or education for two years or, more often, less.

The [Wisconsin Technical College System’s 2015 Graduate Outcomes](#) survey found transportation and logistics program graduates reported a starting median salary of \$35,357. Within the industry, though, starting median salaries for some jobs are higher than that.

Graduates with a short-term technical certification to drive a commercial truck reported a median salary of \$44,300, not to mention that roughly 90 percent of survey respondents said they found work in related fields.

Graduates with one-year technical degrees in diesel engine service and mechanics, marine repair and power train servicing reported median starting wages between \$34,900 and \$39,000, according to state technical college data. And 100 percent of the graduates in all four of those areas of study reported finding jobs.

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