Pollutant emissions from the shipping sector have more than doubled during the pandemic in Singapore, with increases also seen in other major international seaports.

In Singapore, shipping emissions have increased by 123 per cent during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to analyses from modelling. Emissions doubled in Los Angeles, increased by almost two-thirds (65 per cent) in Hamburg, Germany, and rose by over a quarter (27 per cent) in Long Beach, California.

In the shipping industry, which handles about 90 per cent of the world’s freight, the freeze in industrial production and human activity arising from the pandemic resulted in general lower air pollution. One reason could be the prolonged turnaround times due to Covid-19-related delays, says NTU don Professor Adrian Law from Nanyang Technological University’s School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, who led the study.

Hotelling of ships refers to the phase when ships are berthed at terminals and anchorage areas but cannot continue to emit exhaust gases while they await cargo loading or discharging or their next voyage. The operations can be extended several times when there are heightened precautions at ports and the increased demand for raw materials in the second half of 2020 as industrial activity resumed.

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