Port of SF Reduces Emissions Of Docked Cruise Ships
KPIX TX, San Francisco

A program launched by the Port of San Francisco in September has helped reduce sulfur emissions from cruise ships by nearly 20 tons, port officials reported on Tuesday.

The program, which is funded by a grant through the Environmental Protection Agency, encourages cruise liners to use low-sulfur fuel while in port in exchange for reduced dockage fees.

Thirty-three cruise ships have participated in the program in its first nine months. In that time, sulfur emissions have been cut by 19.3 metric tons, and particulate matter emissions have shrunk by 677 pounds.

Ships that agree to use the low-sulfur fuel, which is more expensive than higher-sulfur fuel, receive a credit toward their dockage fees that is equal to approximately 50 percent of the cost difference between the two types of fuel. The EPA contributes the credit toward the dockage fee, and the cruise ships themselves pay the other half of the extra costs for the cleaner fuel.

Dockage fees depend on the length of the ship, but generally run between two and six thousand dollars each day the ship is at port.

The cruise ships are willing to pay extra for the low-sulfur fuel in an effort to be "good neighbors," according to Michael Nerney, the maritime marketing manager with the port.

"The Port of San Francisco is proud of our role in bringing the EPA and the cruise lines together for this collaborative effort to improve air quality in the Bay Area," said Port Maritime Director Peter Dailey. "We are committed to supporting the cruise business while being mindful of environmental concerns."

Approximately $80,000 of the $100,000 grant has been used, leaving enough grant funding for eight additional cruise ships to participate in the program, according to the port.

The port has applied to the EPA to have the funding for the program extended into the next grant term.

Next year, the California Air Resources Board plans to require all ships to use low-sulfur while docked at port, or to use shore-side power if it is available.