

What Railroads Haul: Wood & Paper Products

The United States is a leading consumer of wood and paper products as well as a leading global producer, thanks to plentiful raw materials, a highly skilled workforce and efficient transportation.

Railroads play a major role in delivering wood and paper products, from the lumber to build houses to the cardboard boxes used for e-commerce. Producers and consumers of wood and paper products rely on railroads because of railroads' cost effectiveness, reliability, and global and nationwide reach.

- International Trade:** Many of the wood and paper products consumed in the United States are shipped by rail from Canada. These international shipments are just one example of how America's freight railroads are crucial to international trade, America's economy and everyday life.
- New Homes:** Freight rail movements are largely dependent on the demand for the products railroads haul. For example, most lumber consumed in the U.S. is used to build new homes, and much of that lumber moves by rail. In fact, rail shipments of lumber are so integral to new home construction that rail carloads of lumber are considered a key indicator of housing market health.
- Heavy Hauler:** Lumber is often transported on centerbeam flatcars while paper products usually move in boxcars. A standard centerbeam can carry close to 200,000 pounds of lumber or other construction material such as wallboard. One centerbeam can carry enough framing lumber for five and a half new homes.

Key Takeaways

- Producers and consumers of wood and paper products rely on railroads because of railroads' cost effectiveness, reliability, and global and nationwide reach.
- Combined, wood and paper products account for around 1.2 million carloads each year, equal to about 4% of total U.S. rail carloads.
- In a typical year, U.S. Class I railroads haul an average of about 430,000 carloads of lumber and wood products and 780,000 carloads of pulp and paper products, including about:
 - 200,000 carloads of lumber and dimension stock and 34,000 carloads of millwork, plywood and veneer.
 - 62,000 carloads of pulpwood logs and wood chips and 220,000+ carloads of various types of paper.
 - 250,000 carloads of paperboard, pulpboard, and fiberboard.
 - More than 260,000 combined carloads of paperboard containers, pulp products, and converted paperboard products.

