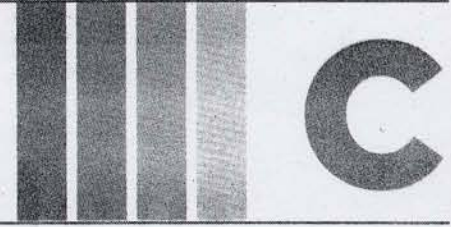


BUSINESS



The Miami Herald



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BUSINESS PLUS

FLORIDA BUSINESS BRIEFS

COURTS

BACCO FIRMS FACE 20 NEW LAWSUITS

About 500 lawsuits were filed by a Friday deadline in Miami-Dade and Broward counties against tobacco companies by smokers claiming smoking-related injuries. The clerk's office for Miami-Dade Circuit Court ordered 291 cases had been heard there, while there were 201 cases filed in Broward Circuit Court. The state Supreme Court ruled ailing smokers must prove individually that cigarettes caused their illnesses, in overturning a \$5 billion damages award in a class-action lawsuit last year. Smokers had until Friday to sue individually.

HOTELS

OWARD CONSIDERS TON PROPOSAL

ECONOMY

Merchandise trade to boom

International merchandise trade is expected to see steady growth well into the next decade even amid recession fears and real estate woes.

BY JIM WYSS
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Latin America's rebound, Asia's push into the hemisphere and the declining dollar are some of the forces that could fuel Miami-Dade County's international trade sector well into the next decade.

According to *The Economic Impact of International Merchandise Trade in Miami-Dade County*, a study to be released Tuesday, the county's global merchandise trade had a \$9 billion impact in 2006 and the sector could see annual growth of between 6 and 7 percent through 2017.

"Considering that we are facing a recession and a weakening housing market, the fact

that the international trade segment will continue to grow — even in the worst case scenario — is very important," said Tony Ojeda, executive director of the Jay Malina International Trade Consortium, which commissioned the report for \$30,000.

The study found that international merchandise trade — which excludes the powerful tourism and financial services sectors — supports 105,459 direct and indirect jobs, or about 7.5 percent of all county employment. That number is expected to top 154,000 by 2017.

Unlike many jobs in South Florida, the wages for trade jobs tend to skew higher. The



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as a hub for Latin America. Indeed, all of the top 15 trade destinations in the Miami Customs District, which includes airports and seaports from Fort Pierce to Key West, are in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As China, India and Japan continue to pioneer new markets in Latin America, Miami is perfectly poised to be a trans-shipment point for their wares, the study found.

But none of these projec-

study found the average salary was \$46,738, or 13 percent above the county average.

Driving the figures is Miami's strategic location

HIGH IMPACT

Miami-Dade's County's international merchandise trade sector will continue to grow:

	2006	2012	2017
Economic impact	\$9B	\$14.6B	\$19.6B
No. of jobs*	105,459	139,882	154,322
Wages generated	\$4.8B	\$6.6B	\$7.5B

* Direct and indirect employment

Source: The Economic Impact of International Merchandise Trade in Miami-Dade County

tions, which are based on figures from the county's airport and seaport, are set in stone, cautioned Manuel Lasaga of StratInfo, which produced the report.

"The future is going to be critically dependent on Miami-Dade's ability to compete with other trading hubs

that have been capturing market share," he said.

Cities such as Atlanta, Dallas and New York are targeting the same clients that Miami-Dade is depending on.

"Sufficient infrastructure investment is key to continuing this favorable trend," he said.