



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

ADMINISTRATIVE RULINGS

Policies/Interpretations

12.8

Sea Cargo / Metal Storage Containers

APPROVED BY:

FIRE MARSHAL

Subject:

Application of VCFPD Fire Code to Prefabricated Sea Cargo / Metal Storage Containers.

Code Requirements:

These containers are considered structures /buildings under the California Building and Fire Codes. As such they are required to comply with building and fire codes if not being used for on-highway transit of goods and materials. These buildings would normally be classified as S occupancies unless modified for other uses in which case another occupancy classification would be applicable (IE: B, F, M).

Discussion:

The original purpose for these types of containers at a facility, when not in transit of goods and materials, was for temporary short term storage and not for long term use in lieu of permanent buildings. The use of these types of containers has become more prevalent due to the cost of constructing permanent buildings. Improper use can be hazardous to life and property. In order to provide for a reasonable degree of life and property protection, the Fire District has consulted with the Ventura County Building & Safety Department (VCBD), VCBD Policy # 1196-B001 (Revised September 26, 2008) and has developed the following requirements.


Requirements:

Sea cargo / metal storage containers shall comply with VCBD Policy #1196-B001 (attached) and the following conditions, subject to Fire Marshal approval:

1. Containers shall be owned or leased by the property owner for their exclusive use or shall be owned or leased by a tenant occupying leased property for the tenant's exclusive use. The intent is to prohibit installation on a property and then lease to other persons or businesses. Property owners shall not lease containers to tenants.
2. Containers shall not be leased to any other person or business.
3. Containers shall not be placed in any required fire department access road / driveway; any required allowable building area yard setback; or within any building egress discharge.

4. Containers with less than 20 feet separation from other containers shall be considered as a “cluster”. Note: there is still a minimum 6 foot separation required between containers within a cluster.
5. Clusters exceeding 1600 square feet of actual container area shall provide fire department access and water supply in accordance with the current Fire District Ordinance.
6. Clusters shall not exceed an area of 300 feet by 300 feet.
7. Clusters shall be separated from other clusters by a minimum 20 foot wide fire department access road / driveway.
8. Clusters requiring a fire department water supply shall provide fire hydrants within 500 feet of all portions of the perimeter of the cluster. Fire hydrants shall provide a minimum fire flow of 500 gpm @ a minimum 20 psi residual pressure.

Containers not in compliance with this ruling shall comply with all requirements of the VCFPD Fire Code in effect at time of application for a permit. This may include requirements for fire sprinklers, water supply and access roads.

COUNTY OF VENTURA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY Building and Safety Division	ORIGINAL <i>May 21, 1996</i>	POLICIES AND INTERPRETATIONS POLICY NO. 1996-B001
Topic: <i>Page 1 of 1</i> Sea Cargo/Metal Storage Containers	REVISED: <i>September 26, 2008</i>	Jim MacDonald, CBO Building Official 

Prefabricated sea cargo/metal storage containers, no larger than 8' X 40', shall be exempt from the permit and foundation requirements of the Ventura County Building Code if all of the following conditions are met.

1. They are used for storage of non-hazardous material only and not for any other purpose (such as habitation).
2. No alterations/modifications such as windows, doors or ventilation openings are made to the container.
3. No utilities connected to or mounted on the container.
4. The minimum distance between containers, other structures, utility meters or utility poles shall be six (6) feet.
5. Containers placed on or adjacent to a slope must meet the slope setback requirements as shown on Division of Building and Safety standard B-70.
6. Even though a building permit may not be required, clearances and/or permits from other agencies may be needed, such as a zoning clearance from the Planning Department or approval from Environmental Health or the Fire Department.
7. They are not stacked or more than one-story in height or located in an unsafe or unstable position.

Prefabricated sea cargo/metal storage containers used for any purpose other than storage of non-hazardous materials shall be subject to all of the requirements of the Ventura County Building Code. They shall not be classed as "Temporary" structures. Permanent foundations shall be provided and the structure shall be attached thereto as required to resist vertical and lateral loads in accordance with all relevant requirements of VCBC Chapters 16 and 18. If any alterations are made to the original container, these shall be designed and detailed by a licensed civil engineer or architect, and shall be made part of the building permit. Electrical, plumbing and mechanical work shall be performed under permit only. If electrical work is to be performed, the structure shall be grounded and bonded in compliance with NEC Article 250, including a grounding electrode system. This policy does not apply to truck trailers.