



803 – SEA CARGO/METAL STORAGE CONTAINERS

APPROVED BY: _____


FIRE MARSHAL

Subject:

Application of Ventura County Fire Code (VCFC) to prefabricated sea cargo/metal storage containers.

Code Requirements:

These containers are considered buildings/structures under the California Building and Fire Codes if not being used for on-highway transit of goods and materials. As such, they are required to comply with all applicable building and fire codes. These buildings would normally be classified as S occupancies unless modified for other uses, in which case, another occupancy classification would be applicable (i.e. 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. They were not intended 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 of these containers can be hazardous to life and property. In order to provide a reasonable degree of life and property protection, the Fire District has consulted with the Ventura County Building and Safety Department (VCBD) regarding their current policy number 1996-B001 (Revised July 12, 2017) and has developed the following requirements.

Requirements:

Sea cargo/metal storage containers shall comply with VCBD Policy # 1996-B001 (attached) and the following requirements, 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.
2. Containers shall not be placed within any required fire department access road/driveway; any required allowable building area yard setback; or within any building egress discharge.

3. Containers with less than twenty (20) feet of separation from other containers shall be considered as a "cluster". Containers may be placed in direct contact up to a maximum of 1,600 square feet of actual container area. There shall be no direct passage between individual containers.
4. Any Cluster exceeding 1,600 square feet of actual container area shall provide fire department access and water supply in accordance with the current VCFC.
5. Multiple clusters shall not exceed an area of 300 feet by 300 feet. A minimum 30 foot fire department access road / driveway shall be provided between separate multiple cluster areas.
6. Clusters shall be separated from other clusters by a minimum 20 foot wide fire department access road/driveway.
7. 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 at a minimum 20 psi residual pressure.
8. Containers located within or adjoining a hazardous fire area shall comply with the brush clearance requirements set forth in VCFC Section W105.

Containers not in compliance with this ruling shall comply with all requirements of the VCFC in effect at the 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: Page 1 of 1 Sea Cargo/Metal Storage Containers	REVISED: <i>July 12, 2017</i>	<i>Ruben M. Barrera</i> Building Official

The Building and Safety Division will observe the following conditions and limitations for the placement and use of metal sea cargo/shipping storage containers on parcels.

Shipping containers used as storage containers:

Prefabricated metal shipping cargo containers used solely for storage of non-hazardous materials on private property shall be considered storage equipment and are exempt from the permit and foundation requirements of the California Building Code (CBC).

Storage containers used for any habitable purpose other than storage will be treated as buildings subject to the requirements of the CBC, and are required to have a building permit issued by the Ventura County (VC) Building and Safety Division prior to installation and use.

Storage of hazardous materials:

Household chemicals may be stored in shipping storage containers in limited quantities when not exceeding the exempt amounts established by the CBC. (See hazardous materials limitations list). The use of shipping containers used for storing hazardous materials in excess of the exempt amounts requires a Building Permit from Building and Safety, and approvals by the VC Planning Division and the VC Fire Department.

Shipping and freight handling yards:

Shipping containers intended for sale, rent, transfer, or delivery of goods to a different site, and handled or stored at shipping yards, freight storage/handling yards, and similar licensed industrial/commercial sites intended for that use are exempt from building permit requirements. These shipping containers may be stacked as allowed by Fire District and Zoning regulations. Stacking of units must be done in a safe manner.

Clearances required:

A Zoning Clearance must be obtained from the VC Planning Division for the placement of all shipping storage containers on parcels. Approvals from the Environmental Health Division and/or the Fire Department may also be required, and must be obtained when applicable. Shipping storage containers must be installed in accordance with those clearances.

Alterations to storage containers:

Alterations made to shipping storage containers should be kept to a minimum. Alterations made to shipping containers proposed for uses other than "storage" are subject to the structural provisions for buildings and must have a valid building permit.

When utilities are installed plumbing, mechanical, and/or electrical permits are required for these installations prior to commencing the work.

Placement of storage containers:

Storage containers should be placed on level ground and not located within 15 feet of an upward slope or within 40 feet of a downward slope exceeding a 3:1 gradient (See Slope Setback limitations). Multiple storage containers should not be stacked or connected to each other in any way, except where permitted for shipping yards.