



ADMINISTRATIVE RULING 26-800 SEA CARGO/METAL STORAGE CONTAINERS

APPROVED BY:

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FIRE MARSHAL

Subject:

Application of the 2025 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 the Ventura County Wildland-Urban Interface Code (VCWUIC).

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