



The City of Long Beach

City of Long Beach • Department of Development Services

Cargo Container Used as Storage

Building and Safety Bureau – Planning Bureau

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Information
Bulletin

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The purpose of this Information Bulletin is to clarify pertinent sections of the Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC), Title 21 Zoning Ordinance that regulates the use and location of transport cargo containers. Transport cargo containers, commonly used on ocean going vessels, may be used as container or incidental storage when all of the Zoning and Building Code regulations are satisfied. This Information Bulletin establishes the minimum conditions and requirements when the containers, if permitted by the Zoning Ordinance, may be considered as a piece of equipment and not a building for the purpose of building code regulations. It is not the intent of this Information Bulletin to address cargo containers located within the Port of Long Beach. If the use is permitted, applicants wishing to use the containers as incidental storage will need to obtain building permits for the containers.

ZONING CODE REGULATION:

LBMC Chapter 21.33 Industrial Districts states that outdoor storage containers used for the duration of more than 72 hours requires an approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP) when located in any industrial zone. No other zone within the City addresses the use of transport containers; therefore, the use of transport containers for storage purposes is not permitted except in industrial zones.

In residential zones, transport containers are regulated similar to accessory buildings or structures. Pursuant to LBMC Section 21.31.245, accessory buildings or structures are allowed in residential zones provided that they comply with the established design standards as required by LBMC Section 21.31.255, which prohibits the use of metallic or metallic-looking siding. This section does, however, allow an application for a Site Plan Review application to be filed to vary from the design standards.

BUILDING CODE REGULATION:

Where transport containers are permitted, either through the CUP or Site Plan Review process as required by the Zoning Ordinance, the containers may be considered a piece of equipment for building code purposes when all of the following conditions are satisfied:

A. Plans, Specifications, and Restrictions

1. A plot plan drawn to scale showing the location of all existing buildings and parking spaces on the lot, and the size and location of the proposed container(s) with respect to those buildings, parking and property lines is required.
2. The containers shall be constructed of steel or aluminum with a minimum 14-gauge thickness except for a wood floor within the metal shell.
3. The Department may deny the request of an incidental storage with a cargo container, if in the Building Official's opinion, such a request creates a violation of the Long Beach Municipal Code or causes an unsafe condition for the occupants of adjacent buildings or property.

B. Location and Size

1. The containers shall be located at least 5 feet from a property line and 10 feet from a building where exterior opening occurs.
2. The containers shall not be located so as to block, obstruct, or reduce any required exits, open spaces, windows, vent shafts, or “required” parking spaces (including access driveways) of the existing buildings on the lot.
3. Each container shall not exceed 10 feet in height, 10 feet in width, and 40 feet in length, and shall have no wall openings except for an access door opening.
4. Containers shall not be “stacked” on top of each other or joined in any manner.

C. Miscellaneous Requirements

1. The use shall be limited to incidental storage to an approved non-residential use and shall not be used to store hazardous materials unless approved by the Fire Department.
2. The use shall not allow human occupancy inside the container.
3. Containers that have been factory-built with any electrical, plumbing, heating or air conditioning systems shall not be connected to a power source.
4. Containers shall be maintained in good condition and free of graffiti at all times.

D. Disabled Access Requirement

1. The use of the containers shall not allow human occupancy and is, therefore, exempt from Title 24, Part 2, of the California Code of Regulations, the State’s Disabled Access and Adaptability requirements.