



Shipping Containers - Summary of Changes

What has changed?

“Regional District of Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw No. 2500, 2024” (Bylaw 2500) has introduced the ability to use shipping containers on many parcels subject to the applicable regulations.

In considering the use of shipping containers, it is important to be aware of the potential safety concerns. Shipping containers used outside of the shipping industry can explode with deadly force if they contain flammable substances that vaporize and combine with a source of heat or ignition. For additional information about shipping container safety please visit:

- [Fire Chiefs Association Position Paper](#) and
- [Work Safe BC Bulletin](#)

Bylaw 2500 contains the following shipping container regulations:

- (a) The use of land for the placement of shipping containers shall be prohibited in all zones, with the following exemptions:
- (i) Shipping containers may be used for shipping related to ‘Shipping Yard’ and ‘Transportation Terminal’, as defined in Bylaw 2500.
- (ii) Shipping containers shall be permitted on a permanent basis subject to the following requirements:

Zone	Parcel Size	Maximum Shipping Container Floor Area (m ²)	Is Stacking Permitted
Industrial	N/A	90	Yes
Agricultural	<8 hectare	60	No
	>8 hectare	90	No
All other zones	>4000 sq m – 1 hectare	30	No
	>1 hectare	60	No

Example: Shipping containers come in many sizes including 2.44 m x 6.1 m (8’ x 20) and 2.44 m x 12.2 m (8’ x 40’). The above regulations are intended to allow for a variety of shipping container sizes to be used in combination provided the maximum shipping container floor area is not exceeded.

Shipping containers are limited to being placed on a property and may not be structurally modified or combined with other shipping containers without meeting the applicable requirements of the British Columbia Building Code.

Want to read Bylaw 2500?

Bylaw 2500 is available online at: <https://www.rdn.bc.ca/bylaws-policies-forms-maps>

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- (iii) A shipping container shall only be located on a parcel where there is an existing principal use and shall be an accessory use for the purpose of this Bylaw, except where the storage of shipping containers is a permitted use.
- (iv) Shipping containers shall be subject to the minimum setback requirements, parcel coverage and all applicable Development Permit Area guidelines.
- (v) Shipping containers located on a parcel on a permanent basis shall be considered buildings that are included in the accessory building floor area, without requiring a building permit.
- (vi) Shipping containers shall not be used for the storage of flammable materials and there shall be no sources of heat or ignition located inside of a shipping container.
- (vii) The maximum number of shipping containers above, shall not apply to shipping containers used for emergency response training and storage or emergency preparedness storage accessory to the provision of emergency services.
- (viii) A development that proposes to convert a shipping container to a use other than storage may be required to meet all applicable building and safety code requirements. Once all building and safety code requirements are met, the shipping container would be a building required to meet all applicable building standards and setbacks of this Bylaw and no longer would be a shipping container.
- (ix) Despite any other provision of this Bylaw, a shipping container may be placed on any parcel for the storage of non-flammable materials, tools, and supplies during construction or maintenance of any utility, building or structure for which a required building permit has been obtained and remains active, provided the shipping container is removed within 14 days upon completion of construction.
- (x) All shipping containers shall be adequately ventilated to the satisfaction of the Regional District of Nanaimo.
- (xi) Despite (x) above, ventilation requirements shall not apply to shipping containers placed on a parcel during construction in accordance with (ix) above, or are placed on a parcel on a temporary basis of less than 90 days.

Is a Building Permit Required for a Shipping Container

Placing a shipping container on a parcel does not require a building permit. However, the use and placement of shipping containers must be in accordance with the applicable regulations.

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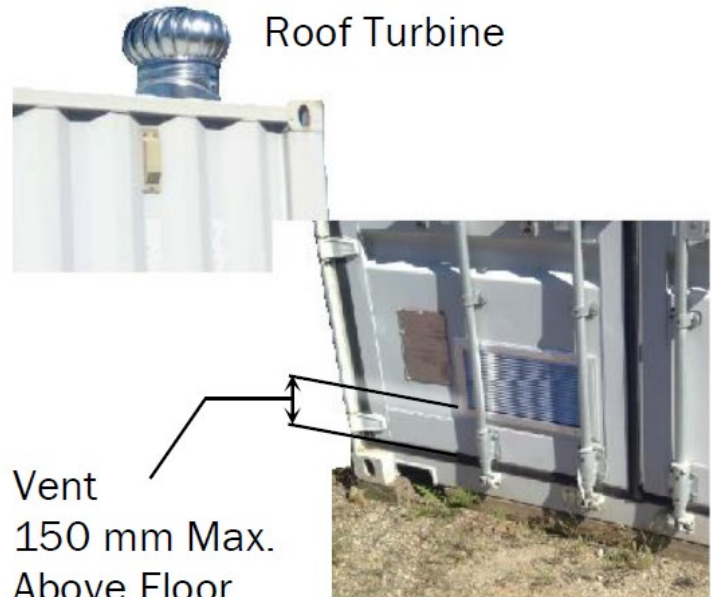
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Adequate Ventilation of a Shipping Container

To address safety concerns associated with the use of shipping containers and to comply with Bylaw 2500 ventilation requirements, shipping containers must be adequately ventilated to the satisfaction of the RDN.

While the RDN has not adopted its own shipping container ventilation standard. The following guidelines have been used in the City of Maple Ridge and are deemed acceptable for use in the RDN until such time as the RDN adopts its own standard.

- One vent within 150 mm of the floor in the container door.
- One vent within 150 mm of the top of the container on the opposite end from the door for cross ventilation. This vent to be in the form of a wind vent device (i.e. turbine) to generate a venturi effect during low wind speeds and can't be directed towards a structure.
- Minimum size of vents to be 300 mm x 300 mm for containers 6.0 m or less in length. Vents to be minimum 500 mm x 500 mm for containers greater than 6.0 m in length.



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