

CARGO CONTAINERS

Conversion to Storage Buildings

A **cargo container unit** is a vehicle or intermodal container designed and constructed to contain or carry freight, including semi-trailers without running gear, railroad car units and shipping containers. Containers do not include mobile homes, manufactured homes, factory-built homes, travel trailers, commercial coaches or other metal storage boxes not built to International Standards Organization container specifications.

When a Building Permit is Required

Cargo containers used as private residential storage:

- Over 200 square feet **DOES** require a building permit.
- 200 square feet or less **DOES NOT** require a building permit, but the container must comply with all Land Use Code regulations, including setbacks and placement restrictions.

How to Apply

Applications can be submitted online through the [Online Customer Portal](#) with the following information:

- Complete building permit application
- Site plan showing the proposed location of the unit
- Either a foundation/anchorage system designed by an engineer, or minimum 3' deep anchors at each corner (such as 'Minute-Man' auger anchors or similar) meeting tie-down requirements for a single, stand-alone unit. Verify whether engineering is required per the criteria listed below.

If submitting permit application in person, please deliver the following:

- Completed building permit application
- Three (3) copies of the site plan showing the proposed location
- Two (2) copies of the engineered design or proposed tie down system.

When Engineering is Required

An engineered design for a foundation and anchorage system of the wall to the foundation must be provided when a converted cargo container unit meets any of the following criteria:

- Exceeds 400 sq. ft. in floor area
- Exceeds 10 feet in height
- Is not a single, stand-alone unit
- Is used for any purpose other than as a private storage building
- Is accessed by the public
- Is not fully supported on a well-draining level surface
- Must meet conditions attached to approval of a land use application.

The engineer must evaluate the container for compliance with minimum site-specific wind, snow, flood and seismic load requirements in the Larimer County Building Code, or the applicant may submit manufacturer's specifications confirming the unit meets these minimum requirements.

Any modifications to the cargo container require additional engineering.



Land Use Code Requirements

Semi-trailers with attached running gear are considered vehicles, not buildings, and are subject to Land Use, not Building Code rules, and cannot be used as storage.

Cargo containers used for a storage warehouse facility in non-residential zone districts must first be approved through a land use application process (such as Site plan or Special Review) before a building permit can be issued. Storage containers used for personal storage on properties outside of non-residential zone districts do not require a land use approval.

Exception: Building Code regulations do not apply to containers classified by Planning staff as 'outdoor storage' instead of 'storage buildings' in the non-residential zone districts.

NOTE: Cargo containers cannot be placed in Flood Hazard Areas and must meet Land Use Code setback requirements from property lines, roads, and waterways, whether or not a permit is required. Permit applications will be reviewed by Planning and Engineering staff as well as the Building Division.