

## Shipping containers

### Shipping container vs building

Shipping containers generally have a life expectancy of approximately 10 years. Less when exposed to a lot of seawater. It is even less again if they are designed as a single use disposal container because single use containers use low-grade steel and have no corrosion protection.

Whether a container is a building depends on the intended use or purpose of the container.

It is not a building if the purpose is to

- load goods to transport those goods via truck, train, ship or plane to somewhere else
- unload goods that have been transported from somewhere else
- if an empty container is on a property for the purpose of repair, storing, or sale.

A building is defined under the Building Act 2004 as a temporary or permanent, movable or immovable structure, including structures intended for occupation by people, animals, machinery or chattels.

A container is therefore a building if

- The purpose of the container is to store hazardous substances or gases as defined in regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

**Note** – a stationary container needs to be expressly designed to contain hazardous substances, not just an ordinary container containing some hazardous substances

- If a container is on a property for any other purpose.

A container on a property (other than a freight forwarding company) to temporarily store household goods until a house is built is an outbuilding with a specified intended life.

### Considerations

It is less likely to be a building if

- a freight company owns the container

It is more likely to be a building

- if the purpose of the container is not for transporting goods
- if the container came from a company that repurposes containers
- the longer the container has been or will be on site
- dependent on what is in the container – e.g. if it has gardening tools hanging on the walls.

## Examples

### Not buildings



Road transport



Rail transport



Freight yard



Hazardous goods store



Containers  
- not a building

A building  
- made from containers

## Buildings



Shopping mall



Workshop



Pedestrian bridge



Sleepout



Retaining wall



Fence



Shed



Site offices

## Building work



Building work