

Informative Note: Definitions

Converted intermodal shipping container

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Based on Manitoba Electrical Code (2018) 13th edition

This information is being provided to clarify the proper definition of a converted intermodal shipping container (sea can).

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information being provided. However, in the event of a discrepancy between this informative note and the governing Manitoba Electrical Code, The Manitoba Electrical Code shall take precedence.

Remember, the Manitoba Electrical Code is constantly being updated. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the latest code requirements before you begin your installation.

Definition: Converted intermodal shipping container (also known as a “sea can”): A non-relocatable building or structural unit, either stand alone or assembled as part of a larger grouping, comprising a repurposed and modified steel shipping container or containers, and containing electrical equipment in support of a temporary or permanent residential, commercial or industrial occupancy. A converted intermodal shipping container is a building.

Intermodal shipping containers have been in use for many years to transport and distribute goods around the world. Since reclamation of the steel is cost prohibitive the recycling industry has attempted to repurpose them to extend their useful lifespan. This includes the conversion of these containers, for various uses including but not limited to residential, commercial and industrial occupancies. These conversions include the installation of specialized electrical equipment to create environmental growth chambers for horticulture, modular data centers, auxiliary power installations including low and high voltage distribution centers, and temporary medical treatment facilities.

Although these containers are not constructed as buildings originally, their robust weatherproof construction lends them to conversion as prefabricated building shells. Local



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jurisdictions throughout Canada and worldwide have mandated that they are considered buildings for the purposes of compliance to local building and electrical code regulations, and fire prevention regulations in force to protect the public.

Intermodal shipping containers are permitted to be approved to the CSA A-277 Standard if conversion or modification occurs within a CSA accredited factory. However, any containers modified or assembled on site or outside an accredited factory (CSA, or other) shall be constructed to local building and electrical codes. In addition, all electrical equipment used within shall be approved.

When used as an addition to permanent buildings, the wiring methods and equipment shall comply to the electrical classification of the building or facility in which they are being re-located as well as the specific use for which the container or containers have been converted.

Remember that a converted intermodal shipping container (sea can) is a building, not a piece of electrical equipment.

Available in accessible formats upon request

