

# Supplemental Community Emergency Supply Caches

## Background

Our division has been working closely with the Oregon Office of Resilience and Emergency Management (OREM) regarding a relatively new local program they are supporting for communities across our state. OREM has requested supportive technical state building code guidance to help facilitate predictable and consistent compliance paths and outcomes statewide. This document is intended to provide such guidance, to support OREM and to support our local government partners in navigating code application for these proposed structures in their local area of service.

The state program involves the placement of supplemental emergency supply caches in selected community areas for use following disasters or design-level events. These caches are *not* mandatory elements of local emergency response or preparedness plans, nor are they considered critical emergency facilities. While they provide meaningful benefit to local communities, it is important to clearly distinguish their supplemental, convenience-based purpose, particularly when identifying regulatory compliance. Establishing this distinction is essential to applying the building code in a reasonable, predictable, and consistent manner.

Where these OREM supplemental emergency supply caches are less than 200 square feet in floor area (their 20-foot unit) they are exempt from building permits under Chapter 1 of the Oregon Structural Specialty Code (OSSC), statewide. Where one of these supply caches is not exempt from building permits by OSSC Chapter 1 Section 105, they would most appropriately be designated as incidental, low risk storage, and **Risk Category I** in accordance with the purpose, intent, and direct citable application of OSSC Chapter 16 Table 1604.5 (Shown below).

TABLE 1604.5—RISK CATEGORY OF BUILDINGS AND OTHER STRUCTURES	
RISK CATEGORY	NATURE OF OCCUPANCY
I	Buildings and other structures that represent a low hazard to human life in the event of failure, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural facilities.</li> <li>• Certain temporary facilities.</li> <li>• Minor storage facilities.</li> </ul>

In the 2025 OSSC, the building permit exemptions listed in Chapter 1 Section 105 were specifically revised to address the most common small-scale intermodal shipping containers. This change has been shared broadly through our statewide code update training video available at [2025 OSSC Code Update Training](#) and is shown below.

Section 105.2	Summary
<p>Nonoccupied Group U Structures</p> <p><b>105.2 Work exempt from permit.</b> For the application and scope of this code, see Section 101. For repairs in existing buildings, see Chapter 34. Permits shall not be required for the following:</p> <p><b>Building:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ...</li> <li>2. One-story detached <i>nonoccupied Group U structures</i>, provided that the gross floor area is not greater than 200 square feet (18.58 m<sup>2</sup>), provided that the structure is not used as a trash enclosure.</li> </ol> <p>From Chapter 2</p> <p><b>NONOCCUPIED GROUP U STRUCTURE.</b> A structure that is not intended for human occupancy, including, but not limited to, private garages, carports, sheds, unmodified <i>intermodal shipping containers</i>, or <i>agricultural buildings</i>.</p>	<p>The purpose of the change was to exempt most single detached, incidental, unmodified intermodal shipping containers used for storage.</p>

However, when the program proposes using a larger 40-foot intermodal shipping container—exceeding the OSSC building permit exemption threshold, local municipalities must determine an appropriate, citable code path. To address questions raised both generally and in connection with OREM’s program, the following outlines relevant regulatory considerations.

## Regulatory Path

OSSC Section 3114 can be considered as a general regulatory path for those containers that are not exempt from building permit. It’s important to note that many subsections within Section 3114 will not apply to the OREM containers which are not being modified or altered. We must carefully navigate the section while keeping both the “value added” and “reasonable safeguards for occupants and users of buildings” regulatory concepts at the forefront of our efforts.

In the leading scope, there are exceptions provided with unique application parameters. Although Section 3114.1, Exception 3 (shown below) specifically references containers housing experimental equipment, the level of operational risk associated with the OREM community supply structures is notably lower. The associated limitations in this section provide a reasonable framework for evaluating placement of these supplemental, low risk storage units.

### OSSC Section 3114

**3114.1 General.** The provisions of Section 3114 and other applicable sections of this code shall apply to *intermodal shipping containers* that are repurposed for use as *buildings* or *structures*, or as a part of *buildings* or *structures*.

#### Exceptions:

1. Stationary storage battery arrays located in *intermodal shipping containers* complying with Chapter 4.
2. *Intermodal shipping containers* that are *listed* as equipment complying with the standard for equipment, such as air chillers, engine generators, modular *data centers*, and other similar equipment.
3. *Intermodal shipping containers* housing or supporting experimental equipment are exempt from the requirements of Section 3114, provided that they comply with all of the following:
  - 3.1. Such units shall be single stand-alone units supported at grade level and used only for occupancies as specified under *Risk Category I* in Table 1604.5.
  - 3.2. Such units are located a minimum of 8 feet (2438 mm) from adjacent *structures*, and are not connected to a fuel gas system or fuel gas utility.

#### Applicable limitations and parameters include:

- Meeting local zoning/land use placement requirements (not located in required setbacks, parking spaces or fire lanes, etc.)
- RC I use; low risk storage of supplemental emergency supplies
- ISO 6346 container compliance documentation or affixed data plate
- Single stand-alone units
- Supported at grade level
- Located a minimum of 8 feet from all adjacent regulated structures
- Not obstructing or impeding any egress path from an adjacent regulated building
- Not connected to a fuel-gas system, or directly to fuel-gas utilities
- Minimal structural design considerations and load paths to maintain position
- Adequate access provided

## Structural Considerations

Regarding minimum structural design considerations, structural anchorage must be addressed for the conditions where the containers are not being modified.

Regulated structures must be designed to resist the effects caused by codified design forces, including overturning, uplift and sliding. A designer may be able to quickly demonstrate that either no anchorage is required (or design minimal anchorage) for these storage structures depending on the project- or site-specific conditions (e.g. container size, design wind speed, supporting material friction coefficient, etc.). Otherwise, minimally, the designer must specify what anchorage is necessary to keep the container in its approved installation location.

## OSSC Section 3114.8

**3114.8 Structural.** *Intermodal shipping containers* that conform to ISO 1496-1 and are repurposed for use as *buildings* or *structures*, or as a part of *buildings* or *structures*, shall be designed in accordance with Chapter 16 and this section.

**3114.8.1 Foundations and supports.** *Intermodal shipping containers* repurposed for use as a permanent *building* or *structure* shall be supported on foundations or other supporting *structures* designed and constructed in accordance with Chapters 16 through 23.

**3114.8.1.1 Anchorage.** *Intermodal shipping containers* shall be anchored to foundations or other supporting *structures as necessary* to provide a continuous load path for all applicable design and environmental *loads* in accordance with Chapter 16.

## OSSC Section 1604.4

**1604.4 Analysis.** *Load effects* on structural members and their connections shall be determined by methods of structural analysis that take into account equilibrium, general stability, geometric compatibility and both short- and long-term material properties. ...

Every *structure* shall be designed to resist the effects caused by the forces specified in this chapter, including overturning, uplift and sliding. Where sliding is used to isolate the elements, the effects of friction between sliding elements shall be included as a force.

## Local Authority and Submittal Requirements

Local building officials have broad discretionary authority to determine necessary code requirements for compliance and to specify which submittal documents are required or can be waived; particularly for the example nonoccupied, low risk, supplemental community supply storage containers:

### OSSC Section 104.2

**104.2 Determination of compliance.** The *building official* shall have the authority to determine compliance with this code, to render interpretations of this code and to adopt policies and procedures in order to clarify the application of its provisions. Such interpretations, policies and procedures:

1. Shall be in compliance with the intent and purpose of this code.
2. Shall not have the effect of waiving requirements specifically provided for in this code.

Consistent with discretionary decision-making powers granted to *building officials*, a *building official* may take any action including but not limited to waiving a requirement, modifying a requirement or accepting an alternate method to the requirements of this code. When waiving a requirement or accepting a modification, a *building official* shall not allow a provision that would create an *unsafe* or dangerous condition regarding fire and life safety and may not enforce requirements that are in addition to this code except where additional code requirements are specified by the terms of an alternate method approval.

### OSSC Section 107.1

**107.1 General.** Submittal documents consisting of *construction documents*, a statement of *special inspections*, a geotechnical report, design calculation and other data as needed to demonstrate that the proposed design and construction conforms to the provisions of this code and relevant laws shall be submitted in two or more sets, or in a digital format where specified by the municipality, with each *permit* application. Where special conditions exist, the *building official* is authorized to require that additional *construction documents* be submitted. The *construction documents* shall be prepared by a *registered design professional* where required by ORS 671 and 672.

**Exception:** The *building official* may waive the submission of plans, calculations, construction inspection requirements and other data and the related plan review fee if it is found that the nature of the work applied for is such that review of plans is not necessary to obtain compliance with this code.

For this scope of work, ORS 671 and 672 do not require submittal documents to be prepared by a registered design professional, as the structure size qualifies for exemption under the **2024 OSBEELS/OSBAE Reference Manual for Building Officials** available at [oregon.gov/osbae/Documents/Reference-Manual-for-Building-Officials.pdf](https://oregon.gov/osbae/Documents/Reference-Manual-for-Building-Officials.pdf).