Railroad Cars and Storage Containers Used as Buildings

Purpose:
To provide guidelines for the application, review, and criteria for railroad cars and storage or cargo containers desired to be located on a private property as buildings and used for a specific purpose.

Background:
These types of large metal containers have been used for storage purposes in the retail arena during the holidays and special events. However, recently they have become more popular for year-round storage. Currently there are several companies and individuals that sell these types of containers for storage and other uses. Whether a permit is required or not, all planning, zoning and fire department requirements must be met.

Policy:
A building permit may or may not be required for these containers based on the specifics of its use. See criteria for “A” and “B” below.

A. PERMIT REQUIRED. A building permit will be required when any of the following are involved:

1. Proposed use is for human habitation.
2. When any electrical, plumbing or mechanical work is involved.
3. When quantities of hazardous materials exceed those listed in CBC Table 307.1(1), or Table 307.1(2).
4. For refrigerated storage.
5. To be used in a “mini-storage” type of business.
6. When one or more containers are stacked upon another container.
7. If additional square footage is being added to the container.
8. If modified in any manner that would not allow them to be readily moved as per original design.
9. Permanently or semi-permanently attached in place or attached to any other type of structure.
10. If modified by adding a roof, doors, windows or other features.
11. If located within 6 feet of any residential building or in the required yard of any commercial building.

B. PERMIT NOT REQUIRED. A building permit will not be required when these containers are used solely for storage and do not meet any of the criteria in section “A” above. However, the applicant is required to perform the following steps:

1. Contact the Planning Department regarding their requirements (setbacks, screening, etc.)
2. Contact the Fire Department regarding their requirements (Use, location criteria, fire lane blockage, combustible storage, etc.)

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Chief Building Official