



NEED SUPPORT OR MORE INFORMATION?

For questions about shipping container safety, or to request technical assistance or fire investigation support, please contact the **Office of the Fire Service Advisor** using the link below:

[Request technical assistance or fire investigation support - Province of BC](#)

Additional Resources:

- [BC Fire Safety Codes & Bulletins](#)
- [Fire Chiefs' Association of BC - Shipping Container Safety Guide \(PDF\)](#)
- [Watch: Fire Risks of Shipping Containers \(YouTube\)](#)

PLEASE READ - Legal Disclaimer -

The information contained herein provides general information only. While it is believed to be accurate, it is provided without representation or warranty of any kind, including as to its accuracy or its suitability for the purpose(s) for which you may wish to rely on it. Accordingly any and all use of or reliance on such information shall be at your own discretion and at your own risk. For greater clarity, Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) (FireSmart™ Canada) and the BC FireSmart Committee agencies accept no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage, whether direct, indirect, special, incidental, punitive or consequential, that any person may sustain as a result of the information in, the results of, or anything done or omitted pursuant to, this fact sheet.

This document was made in partnership with the Office of the Fire Commissioner and the BC Fire Chief's Association.

THE FIRE RISK OF SHIPPING CONTAINERS (SEA CANS)

Shipping containers may seem like the ideal storage solution – they're large, durable, and easy to source. However, they are not designed to withstand wildfire conditions and can pose serious safety risks when exposed to direct flame or radiant heat.

KEY ISSUES:

- **Lack of ventilation:** Heat from nearby fires can cause a buildup of flammable vapours, creating an explosive atmosphere inside the container.
- **Heat conduction:** Steel walls absorb and conduct heat, potentially igniting contents inside even without direct flame – essentially turning the container into an oven.
- **Flammable contents:** Storing items like vehicles, power tools, or fuel cans increases the risk, as containers of flammable liquids can melt and ignite.
- **Proven fatalities:** Shipping containers have been fatal when there has been direct flame impingement - most notably, a firefighter tragically lost their life in 2011 when a container exploded.

For these reasons, FireSmart BC does not recommend the use of shipping containers for storage – especially in wildfire-prone areas. Instead, consider safer alternatives that are both fire-resistant and properly ventilated to reduce the risk of ignition and improve overall safety.

SAFER ALTERNATIVES TO SHIPPING CONTAINERS

For safer outdoor storage, particularly in wildfire-prone areas, we recommend following the **FireSmart BC Firewood Shed Guide and Assessment**. These shed designs offer improved ventilation, allowing flammable vapours (whether heavier or lighter than air) to safely disperse.

IMPORTANT SAFETY PRACTICES:

- **Do not store fuels in sheds.** All fuel products should be stored in containers that are CSA or ULC certified and designed specifically for fuel storage.
- **Avoid using shipping containers for storage.** While they may seem secure, they pose significant fire risks. Use of shipping containers is regulated with bylaws and regulations in municipalities, First Nations, and regional districts. Check with them before taking action.

