

HANDLING CONTAINERS WITH DOORS OFF OR AJAR

INFORMATION FOR SHIPPING COMPANIES AND THEIR AGENTS

This Fact Sheet has been issued to alert and advise shipping companies on the handling of containers with one door removed or ajar.

Some cargoes that require additional ventilation (e.g. onions) are loaded and carried in containers that have their doors secured partly open, or removed. In some cases ventilation fans and trunking are also fitted to the container. It must be stressed that the doors, when properly closed, contribute to the strength of the container in respect of the Allowable Stacking Load and Transverse Racking Test Force as marked on the CSC Safety Approval Plate. Therefore when the doors are open or ajar this strength is lost and damage, permanent distortion or overstressing of other components may occur.

Securing of Cargo and doors

Adequate provision must be made to ensure the cargo remains within the container. The open door space at the aft end of the container must be sufficiently 'chocked and secured' with dunnage to ensure that the cargo cannot fall out. The doors must be secured to prevent movement. The resultant loss of slots or interfere with vessel lashing systems, when doors are lashed back must be given due consideration. Consequently shipping companies have differing approaches with regard to the accepting containers with doors off or door ajar (secured ajar by way of chocks top and bottom, and banded through the locking rods from the open door to the closed door) or tied back, depending on the configuration of the vessels in the service and other company policies.

Visibility of the CSC Safety Approval Plate

Under Marine Orders Part 44, the CSC Safety Approval Plate must be permanently affixed in a readily visible place, where it will not be easily damaged. The US Coast Guard requires all container owners, lessors and container vessel operators to ensure that any freight container placed in international transport operations will at all times have a visible CSC Approval Plate on an aft door of the freight container. i.e. door with the CSC Plate must not be removed.

Lifting of containers that have not been approved to be handled with their doors secured partly open or removed

Containers that have their doors secured partly open or removed, must only be handled by equipment that applies a direct vertical force to the corner fittings. Operators should also be aware containers with doors open or ajar, could also cause problems or be badly damaged when being handled by straddle carriers or other terminal/customer handling equipment.

Stowage of containers that have not been approved to be handled with their doors secured partly open or removed (onboard the vessel)

Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) has directed that unless the shipper of containers to be handled with their doors open or removed, can provide written evidence from the Authority responsible for the approval of the container(s), as to their Allowable Stacking Load with the doors open, containers shipped with their doors open or removed shall not be over-stowed by more than one loaded container or two empty containers (total maximum weight of 10 tonnes).

The US Coast Guard has given directions that if an existing CSC approved freight container, that has not been Tested for operation with one door removed, is placed in one-door-off transport operations, it may be allowed for use only if top-stowed on the vessel.

Containers currently in use (built and delivered before 01 June 2000) is modified/tested and approved for handling with doors secured partly open or removed

The US Coastguard has ruled that if the CSC container modification testing for one-door operation has been completed, it should be ensured that the modified freight container design is noted on the freight container's CSC Approval Plate for both two-door and one-door transport operations. This allowance will affect only an existing CSC approved general freight container built and delivered before June 1, 2000. Multiple stacking of such containers is permissible. This allowance for one-door-off operations will not be provided for the transportation of dangerous goods or liquids of any kind.

If the CSC container has been tested for one-door operation, this should be so noted on the CSC Safety Approval Plate.

Containers built and delivered on or after 01 June 2000

The US Coastguard has given a directive that a container constructed and delivered on or after June 1, 2000, shall not be allowed this variance to the CSC modification requirements. A new freight container shall be tested for one-door-off operation and have its CSC Approval Plate marked with the minimum operational requirements (including multiple stacking), or the container will be detained for non-compliance with the CSC for international transportation of goods.

Many shipping companies have series of 20' and 40' containers, which have been tested and CSC plated with one door removed, in compliance with US Coastguard directives allowing 9 high stacking.

Fans and Splitter Boards

Shippers must be advised stowage may be such that access to any fans (if fitted) is not possible above the second tier on deck (Tier 84) and containers will be shipped only at Shipper's risk. Most shipping companies insist that the fitting of splitter boards, ensuring correct fan blade rotation and the recovery of fans (including provision of fans/spares) if required, is the responsibility of the shipper or the shipper's contractor.

Container Seals

The shippers of containers shipped with their doors secured partly open or removed must be advised to verify with the import country's customs authority that the import of containers not sealed at the port of departure are acceptable.

Road and Rail Regulations

The shippers of containers shipped with their doors secured partly open or removed must be advised to verify that such containers can be transported on road and rail in the exporting and importing country without contravening road and rail regulations (it contravenes road regulations in New Zealand).

Damage to Door and other components during detaching and attaching doors

Consideration should be given to the cost of repairing damaged door seals, paintwork, hinges and bushes and the difficulty in refixing the door, which may make the operation uneconomical. Damage caused to the door stowed inside the container by the cargo must also be borne in mind.

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Level 6, 131 York Street SYDNEY NSW 2000
ABN. 61 096 012 574