



Container Numbers

Every container carries an identification number stencilled on the door end and sides. It follows a strict international format: a four-letter owner code (always ending in U for freight containers), six digits, and a single check digit, for example NZLU1234567. Ports, shipping lines, and KiwiRail use this number to track individual containers through their systems.

If your container is going onto coastal shipping or rail, the number must be clearly legible. An incomplete, faded, or damaged number won't be accepted at any New Zealand container terminal. If you need to reapply your original number, you'll find it on your CSC plate or inside the door.



The CSC Plate

If you own a shipping container, you'll find a small metal plate riveted to the door end: the CSC plate (Convention for Safe Containers). It's the container's official safety certification, confirming it has been structurally tested to international standards for stacking, lifting, and transport. The plate shows the date of manufacture, maximum gross weight, allowable stacking load, and a safety approval number issued by a recognised classification society. Think of it as the container's WOF.

Whether you need a valid CSC plate depends on how you're moving the container. Road transport requires no CSC, as NZTA governs overland movement and CSC isn't a factor. KiwiRail also doesn't require one, but the container must be structurally sound, ISO-compliant, and within gauge. Coastal shipping is where the CSC becomes mandatory: ports won't accept a container without a valid, legible, current plate or re-inspection sticker. If yours is missing, damaged, or past its inspection date, you'll need a re-inspection through an accredited surveyor before it can travel on a coastal vessel in New Zealand.