

TEU, FEU and the container – the dimensions that run world trade

Upcoming episode

TEU, FEU and the container standards explained: what the unit actually counts, why the 40-footer dominates, what the number on the side means, and why the standardisation mattered more than the box itself.

MAIN TOPICS

- What a TEU actually is, and why it is not a container
- FEU, and why the 40-footer is the common one
- The height that is not in the name
- The other types – reefer, open top, flat rack, tank
- The number on the side, and what each part means
- The size and type code
- Filling up on weight or on volume
- Why the standard mattered more than the box

QUESTIONS THIS EPISODE ANSWERS

- What does TEU mean?
- What is the difference between TEU and FEU?
- How big is a 20-foot container?
- What is a high cube?
- What do the letters and numbers on the side of a container mean?
- What is the difference between cubing out and weighing out?
- Why is the container so important?

KEY POINTS

- A TEU is a unit of measure, not a container. It is a 20-footer converted into a counting unit.
- A 40-footer is 2 TEU, and is called an FEU. Most containers in circulation are 40-footers.
- A high cube is a foot taller than standard, and still counts as the same number of TEU.
- The number on the side follows ISO 6346: owner code, equipment identifier, serial number and check digit.
- You run out of volume or of weight – rarely both at once.
- The valuable thing was never the box, but that everyone agreed on the dimensions.

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

- BIC – Container Identification Number (ISO 6346)
<https://www.bic-code.org/identification-number/>

- BIC – Container Size and Type Code
<https://www.bic-code.org/size-type-code/>
- ISO 6346:2022 – Freight containers: Coding, identification and marking
<https://www.iso.org/standard/83558.html>

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