

Just Released: A Review of Manufactured Housing Installation Standards and Instructions

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The manufactured housing industry is undergoing an intense period of transition and re-evaluation. The core market for lower-cost, "traditional" manufactured homes has shrunk, yet there remains strong pressure to economize by retaining the "pier and tiedown" method of installing homes. What's more, pressure from residents intolerant of traditional manufactured homes continues to fuel the development of products and installation techniques that attempt to make these affordable homes more closely resemble site-built housing.

In addition to adding to the home's cost, these products and techniques introduce new and often complicated installation measures that need to be regulated through installation standards. Training of assembly workers and possible retooling in the factories are also issues that must be addressed. The Manufactured Home Improvement Act of 2000 (MHIA) requires that draft Model Installation Standards (MIS) be developed by the Manufactured Housing Consensus Committee (MHCC).

Fortunately, a new document titled "A Review of Manufactured Housing Installation Standards and Instructions" will be used by HUD to prepared a final MIS to be used by states as a baseline when writing their own installation standards. The report can also be helpful in setting a minimum baseline for manufacturers in preparing the Manufacturer's Installation Instructions (MII) required for each home model under the HUD Code that regulates the construction of manufactured housing.

The report is a review of several manufacturers' installation instructions (MII's) and the "Manufactured Home Installation Guide" by George Porter, published by the Manufactured Housing Institute (MHI) in 2002.

Appendix B covers the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 225, which contains the draft MIS, plus several state installation standards. Sixty- three criteria were developed, each addressing a key topic. Most of these criteria address the contents of installation standards, while some address manufacturer installation instructions. Each criterion includes a discussion followed by a possible action, for which advantages and disadvantages are enumerated. Examples of these criteria are:

- o Structural Support of Add-Ons Added Later
- o Flood-Resistant Foundations
- o Crawlspace Ventilation
- o Structural Connections Between Home Sections
- o Extent of Local Jurisdiction Responsibility
- o Performance of Site-Installed Siding

As HUD-Code homes become more similar to site-built and modular homes, the boundaries separating manufacturer, retailer, installer, and on-site contractors become increasingly murky, interfering with the consumer's ability to assign responsibility for error. This document suggests some ways of assigning responsibility and mending breaches between the various participants. Particular attention is paid to cases where responsibility is refused by one party in a way that leaves the consumer unable to proceed.

"A Review of Manufactured Housing Installation Standards and Instructions" is available on the web at <http://www.huduser.org/publications/Destech/MHsgDRM.html> or in printed form for a nominal charge by calling HUD USER at 1-800-245-2691.

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