



MANUFACTURED
HOUSING
Institute of South Carolina

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FAKE TINY HOME SCAMS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

COLUMBIA – Consumers across South Carolina should be on the lookout for illegal structures being misrepresented and sold as tiny homes.

The Manufactured Housing Institute of South Carolina (MHISC) has learned of an increasing number of small popup operations across the state featuring road-side retailers selling modified storage sheds marketed as “tiny homes” intentionally misrepresented as legal dwellings.

In many cases, these structures are not built to proper state codes and lack the safety standards needed to support habitation, including proper ventilation for toxic byproducts of heating and cooking appliances.

When purchasing a prefabricated tiny home intended for permanent residence, customers should make certain the home is built to either the South Carolina Residential Building Code or the federal Housing and Urban Development Code. Such legal structures are required to have labels in their breaker boxes certifying they have been inspected by someone licensed by either the SC Building Codes Council or HUD. If a prefabricated home does not have one of these two labels, it is illegal to use as a residence in SC.

Several county building code officials in SC have reported that unlawful businesses are purchasing prefabricated storage sheds under 200 square feet that are considered “accessory structures” by the state, and then modifying them to include amenities such as plumbing, electric, and/or HVAC.

Under section R105.2(1) of the 2018 SC Residential Code, detached structures under 200 square feet that are not intended for living purposes are considered “accessory structures” and receive exemptions from permitting requirements. However, when these amenities are added, the intent of the structure is considered altered and it no longer receives these exemptions.

According to several county inspectors, when an inspector discovers an illegal structure on residential property without proper permits, the structure must be modified to meet the SC Residential Code or be demolished. In most cases, the inspector will require that the finished walls be torn out for inspection purposes, and fines may be levied against the owner.

Officials are asking for help identifying these scams. If you are aware of any of these unlawful practices happening in the state, please reach out to your county’s building inspections department. In addition, report suspected unlicensed practice by filing a complaint with the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation at llr.sc.gov. The SC Residential Builder’s Commission handle issues with illegal modifications to previously legal structures, and the SC Building Codes Council handles issues with illegally manufactured structures.



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MEDIA GUIDE

ABOUT MHISC – The Manufactured Housing Institute of South Carolina is a non-profit business association representing the manufactured and modular housing industries in the state. The member-run organization was founded in 1967 and is comprised of over 400 companies. MHISC’s mission is to maximize opportunities for South Carolinians to enjoy the benefits of factory-built homes. One out of every five South Carolina families live in a manufactured home, and around 4,500 new manufactured homes are sold in the state every year.

IMPORTANT TERMS

MANUFACTURED HOME: Manufactured homes are built in a controlled factory environment for use as a permanent home. Homes built after 1976 to a national building code are manufactured homes. They are built to standards issued under the National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C.A. §§ 5401-5426), also known as the HUD code.

MOBILE HOME: Modern manufactured homes are no longer referred to as “mobile homes.” This term specifies a major turning point in building codes, as “mobile home” is reserved for structures built prior to the creation of national building codes in 1976. Any home built after 1976 is by definition not a mobile home.

This distinction is most important when discussing safety issues. Mobile homes were generally built to very loose codes, while manufactured homes are built to stringent federal standards. These two types of structures are also treated differently by some local and county ordinances.

MODULAR HOME: Modular building yields a finished product that is nearly indistinguishable from a traditionally built home. These homes are built in-factory in sections and transported to a traditional foundation. These homes must be built to the same state code as traditional homes.

TRAILER / TRAILER PARK: “Trailer” refers to a product that functions primarily to be pulled behind a vehicle with intent to be easily portable. These can be campers, travel trailers, etc. “Trailer Parks” more closely resemble campsites and are used for very short-term stays (such as traveling workers).

Manufactured homes are generally only moved one time, and must be carried by a dedicated rig. Campers, RVs or anything that can be pulled behind a passenger vehicle is not considered a manufactured home by both the industry and building code standards.

TINY HOME: A generic marketing term used to describe small structures intended for residential use. Tiny homes may be built on site or prefabricated in a factory. If a tiny home is factory built, it must be either a manufactured home and built to the HUD code, or be a modular home built to the state residential building code.