



Manufactured Home Update

Oregon Department of Consumer & Business Services ■ Building Codes Division

December 2000

Interested in reducing service costs? _____

by *Laurene Bates, Emerald Lifestyle Homes, Springfield*

For the past 11 years, a major portion of my job has been supervising setup and service crews. I believe that dealers who want satisfied customers have to develop policies, procedures, and lines of communication that ensure a quality set, service, and an informed customer. I'll describe the major elements of Emerald Lifestyles Homes' set-up and service programs so that new dealers and service managers may have an easier time than mine — who learned by guess and by golly.

Communication

The most important thing I do is have "service talks" with customers. During my service talk, I discuss the following:

- The schedule of events: who is going to be in the house doing what and how long each activity should take.
- If the customer is doing his or her own improvements, I find out how much construction experience he or she has, and I give the customer handouts about inspections and various code issues.

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Check site for grading requirements _____

by *Mark Campion, inspector*

Final site grading and drainage can be a hidden cost for new homebuyers. They're often caught by surprise when the local building inspector requires corrective action to control water runoff at the site and concentrated water from the gutters. Adding culverts, low-point drains, retaining walls, and French drains can be expensive and time-consuming.

Even if a dealer doesn't offer these improvements, the service manager or sales staff should check the site with the homeowner and inform the buyer of potential issues with drainage. That way, the homeowner can secure bids and budget for needed improvements. ■

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- I go over the Oregon Lien Law and have the customer sign the state's brochure so I have physical evidence of having complied with the disclosure required by the state.
- I also make disclosures of my own regarding rough-grade backfill, concrete care and cracking, and storm doors.
- I go through the manufacturer's manual with each customer and discuss warranties.
- I inform customers which regularly scheduled services are included with their home purchase and how to obtain additional service if they need it.

Customer anxiety levels seem to be significantly lower after the service talk. The number of phone calls the staff has to answer is also greatly reduced.

Improving on setup

The Oregon Manufactured Dwelling Standard has greatly improved the quality of sets and the professionalism of set-up crews.

There are additional things set-up crews can do to reduce service costs:

- A. Lag the underside of the ridgebeam. Since we started this practice, we have had no ridgebeam drywall cracks.
- B. Lag all walls at the column supports. By reducing movement in the walls, drywall cracks are also reduced.
- C. Lag outside end walls to help reduce wall movement.
- D. Support the marriage line floor four feet on center in open spans as well as under walls. This has greatly reduced floor problems and squeaks.
- E. On triple-wide roofs, span the marriage line with a two-foot to four-foot section of roof sheathing. Spanning the roof seam accomplishes two things: It evens out the roof line when the sections have a height difference, and it reduces roof leaks.

Service

We exclusively use contractors to do our initial service. While there are advantages and disadvantages to using contractors, I feel that dealers have every right to establish quality standards and require contractors to meet those standards.

We require our contractors to cut back sheetrock wherever the rock crosses a marriage line. The adjacent studs on the marriage line are screwed and a new piece of drywall installed, running from stud to stud across the marriage line. Again, we are reducing the possibility of drywall cracks.

Our contractors are responsible for surveying the entire home for factory repairs that need to be completed.

The initial service contractor walks the roof to look for leaks and crawls the house to snug up piers that may have loosened since the set.

Our service manager conducts a walk-through with each customer one week after the customer moves into the new home. She shows the customers how to operate heating systems, change the filters, check the smoke alarms, etc.

She also has a 142-item checklist to make sure every element of the home is functioning properly.

The final key to having happy customers is monitoring open service work orders for both factory and dealer items. We have found that 30 days is a maximum for completing repairs.

All open work orders are reviewed with the factory and each contractor weekly.

Those are the basics. I hope you find them helpful. ■

Try on-site training

by Al Rust, installation coordinator

When we reviewed our installation survey inspections, we found several MDIs that had never had their work monitored or had the opportunity of the on-site installer training program. In December, I sent out letters to all of the contractors on the NEVER list, and the response has been great.

The letter explains to the contractor about the on-site training and asks them to contact this office, (503) 378-8053, to have a training officer contact them to make arrangements to meet in the field for a training session.

So, if you have received one of these letters, please contact this office and we will meet with you. If you feel a little rusty on the codes or for any other reason, and want some on-site training, give me a call. We also use these sessions to get input from you. ■

Perimeter support: Who's doing it?

by *Tony Clifton*

More times than not, when we are performing field inspections (installations, alternate-construction inspections, and some consumer-assistance cases) our inspectors find that perimeter and required end-wall supports are not installed. When they question why these two issues have not yet been addressed, the reason most often given is "The LSI will do (or should have done) this work." When we hear this, we may ask if there was a written agreement addressing this issue. Most answer "No."

My question to those MDIs: "Why not?"

There are a number of good reasons for MDIs to document what work they are contracting to do.

When an MDI relies on a handshake or an oral commitment and the support is questioned, we expect the MDI to correct the problem. This "callback" is much

more costly for the MDI than a sheet of paper and the use of a pen. As an example of those costs, an MDI may be expected to address stress cracks in the drywall or siding, or both, in addition to the time needed to address a house with the crawlspace enclosed.

As a reminder to those who have been setting houses since the old "metal/metal" (metal roofs/metal siding) days, the manufactured houses being built today here in the Northwest are considerably heavier.

So... contrary to what some of you believe, things have changed from the time when a handshake was enough. Protect yourself from liability for consequential damage to the home, and start putting in writing what you're responsible to do. If you have questions about this, contact Al Rust, (503) 378-8053. ■

When and where are tie-down anchors required?

by *Al Rust, installation coordinator*

Tie-down anchors are required in the counties along the Oregon Coast and along the Columbia River as shown in the wind zone map in the 1997 OMDS, Section 307. Tie-downs also are required in flood-hazard areas (OMDS, Section 308). Tie-downs also may be required as part of lending-institution requirements or contractual agreements. Everyone should make certain of the requirements and have an understanding as to who will install the tie-downs.

If an installer mixes prefabricated piers and concrete-block piers on a multi-section home in an area designated as a high-wind zone in Section 307, the home is required to be tied down. An exception is prefabricated piers that are tested and listed to 1.5 times the horizontal wind load of 15 pounds per square foot.

All anchoring systems installed in Oregon, whether or not in areas where tie-downs are required, need to be installed to the anchor manufacturer's installation instructions or the OMDS in the absence of manufacturer's instructions.

Homeowners may use tie-downs for reduced interest rates on their home loans or for reduced insurance rates. If the home suffers damage due to winds and the tie-down device was not installed to the requirements, financial repercussions could fall on the homeowner and the contractor who installed the equipment. ■

Please note state on insignia reports

by *Irene Lickiss, insignia specialist*

Due to the massive buy-outs of small dealerships by the larger manufacturing companies, many of the dealerships have the same name. For example, there are six "Affordable" dealerships covering four states in which a manufactured home might be purchased and then delivered in Oregon.

Although this is not required by rule, I am requesting that you indicate the town in which each dealership is located when you enter the dealer name on your monthly reports. This will eliminate a lot of the guesswork on my part and make the necessary population studies more accurate. ■

Missing link in communication causes expensive problems for dealers, homeowners

by Albert Endres

Over the years, it's become evident that there is a missing link in communication and documentation between the retailer and the homeowner that causes purchase, installation, service, and maintenance problems.

Homeowners must be made aware of maintenance requirements in the homeowners' manuals, and retailers need to document the procedure.

Common complaints include relevels, texture cracks, and loose piers.

First of all, let me explain the position of the Building Codes in customer assistance inspections that deal with texture cracks: If a written texture policy was provided to the homeowner and acknowledged on a signed copy of the policy, inspectors look to that agreement first, because if there is a document available, it's easy to mediate the situation.

We do not accept the policy of the retailer if we have clear evidence through inspection that cracks are directly related to improper installation, missing bolts, missing piers, undersized footings, improper stands, numerous loose piers, or associated noncompliances.

A missing block under a marriage line crack? We expect the crack to be repaired.

We deal regularly with homes that have been sold for 14 months when the homeowner complains of cracks. If there is a signed policy concerning the owner's responsibility to maintain the installation, and we notice minor settling or a random loose pier, we simply inform the homeowner of his or her responsibility. If there is a paper trail showing that this has been an ongoing problem with the retailer or installer, we look to those parties for resolution of the problem.

"No one told us"

Too many times we hear from the owner, "No one told us." It would sure be nice if there was evidence that owners knew their responsibilities. This applies not only to texture cracks and blocks, but also to many other aspects of the home.

Roofs, walls, baths, appliances, hardware, windows, and many other operational features need to be maintained. Let's make sure that homeowners know this and that we can prove it.

As a note, the average "home age" at which consumers contact us at BCD is two years from installation. Many of these contacts are about maintenance. Many, too, indicate a lack of proper repair by the manufacturer or retailer — but that's a different story. ■

Tag reports show industry has slowed

by Irene Lickiss, insignia specialist

This is the perfect time to talk about your tag reports, since it is the slow time of year and nearly year's end.

Everyone who has ordered tags needs to check his or her records and catch up on tag reporting. I have a few statistics for you to mull over:

We can ascertain from this table that the industry has slowed down somewhat, and that tags issued most recently haven't been reported. This is natural.

I'm wondering if 12 percent of 1998 certification tags are still unused, though. Might some of these be unreported tags that need reporting?

If this is a slow time for you, would you send me some more reports? I would be happy to give you an update in the next newsletter to show you the difference.

This will be especially useful to me as we begin using a new version of our database in the new year. ■

Tag reports as of 11/29/00

Year	Tags Issued	Reported	Unreported	Percent reported	Percent unreported
1998	9,674	8,485	1,189	88%	12%
1999	7,892	6,677	1,215	85%	15%
2000	5,981	2,988	2,993	50%	50%
Totals	23,547	18,150	5,397	77%	23%

Installers should use only their own tags

by Irene Lickiss, *insignia specialist*

We here at Building Codes recently received a call from an active, highly respected, long-time installer. He stated that he had set up a home and gone to another job. Meanwhile, a skirting installer came along, did his job, then checked off what he did on the original installer's certification tag. This is a no-no. The original installer did not do the skirting portion of the job.

According to OAR 918-515-0300, 1: Licensed... installers installing manufactured dwellings ... and skirting shall affix a Division-issued certification tag to the manufactured dwelling, cabana or skirting upon completion of the installation, and prior to inspection by the authority having jurisdiction.

Each installer individually responsible for some portion of the installation of a manufactured home must

affix a certification tag on that home and indicate what he or she completed on that home. Each tag must bear the license number of that installer. There is an average of two installer certification tags per manufactured home. Theoretically, there can be as many as four or five certification tags on a home. It all depends on the work each installer does.

The reason for the installer tags is to indicate that all phases of the installation work are complete and in compliance with the Oregon Manufactured Dwelling Standard. When there is a problem with an installation, the responsible party can be identified.

Please call Irene Lickiss, (503) 373-1257, if you have any questions regarding installer certification tags. ■

Database changes for certification tags

by Irene Lickiss, *insignia specialist*

We're getting a much-needed upgrade to the installer-certification-tag database. We plan to have it operational in January.

We're working on debugging the system, but because we can only debug the system completely by using it in real time, we may find a few glitches. I highly recommend that all installers keep copies of their monthly certification tag reports until we're sure everything is working smoothly. The new database has a few enhancements that should make our in-house reporting processes easier.

There will not be a change to the installer's certification report form that you use; however, there will be some differences in the format of the certification report log printouts that are sent to you occasionally. The new format of the printout will be "portrait" (lengthwise rather than "landscape"). We have eliminated the "work performed" portion of the log. Everything else remains the same.

Please call the insignia desk, (503) 373-1257, if you have questions regarding installer certification tags. ■

Installation Monitoring Program: Rest well, but sleep lightly

by Michael A. Kammer, *MDI 123*

It's over now. When it started, we all fretted about it, complained to everyone who would listen, and thought, "It won't help me."

Well, we were wrong. The Installation Monitoring Program provided a great service to our part of the industry. I know I dreaded receiving one of those reports when it came in the mail. It meant I would have to go back to a home and check to see if I or one of my trusted installers truly messed up. Then, after determining what went wrong, write an explanation to BCD as what went wrong and how I had fixed it.

Having been involved since the beginning with the committee writing the Manufactured Dwelling Standard and seeing the reports on how much installers have improved the quality of set-ups, I know that the inspections and training worked — and worked well. We provided a better product to the consumer as a result of it, and I hope that we, as installers, don't backslide.

The Installation Monitoring Program has been suspended, but we owe a lot to Dan Crane, Leon Creswell,

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Take care with alterations to manufactured homes

by Tom Nicolai

Alterations are, by definition in the Oregon Manufactured Dwelling Standards (OMDS), any change, repair, conversion, replacement, modification, or removal of any equipment or installation that may affect the operation, construction, or occupancy of a manufactured home.

Alterations can be made to a manufactured dwelling at any time after the original manufacture of the home. The time of the alterations in relation to the sale determines which codes govern the alterations and which jurisdiction inspects them.

Before or at the time of sale

An alteration before or at the time of first sale to the consumer (up to the time when all terms of the sales contract have been met) must conform to the Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards (HUD Code), the National Electrical Code, and the manufacturer's design approved package.

In-plant inspectors from Building Codes Division inspect alterations performed before or at the time of the first sale. To obtain the required permit, contact Albert Endres, (503) 378-5975. Normally the dealer coordinates the inspections and approvals on site.

Exceptions to this rule include site-installed solid-fuel-burning fireplaces, wood stoves, heat pumps, and air-conditioning equipment; permits for these should be obtained through the jurisdiction that will inspect

the product to the terms of the appliance listing. Building Codes Division can help customers identify the appropriate jurisdiction.

After the initial sale

An alteration performed on a home after it's sold to the customer is a secondary alteration. Secondary alterations must conform to the Oregon One and Two Family Dwelling Specialty Code and the National Electrical Code. Permits and inspections are obtained through the local jurisdiction. Again, BCD can help identify the appropriate jurisdiction.

HUD labels or state insignias do not have to be removed when alterations are done in accordance with ORS 446.155 and OAR 918-515 and 918-520 and also in accordance with 1997 Oregon Manufactured Dwelling Standards, Sections 1001 through 1005, where applicable.

BCD has noted through dealer lot inspections and service record reviews that numerous alterations are being made by persons who have not obtained the required alteration permits. State law requires that changes made to a home after it leaves the manufacturing facility be inspected to ensure that alterations comply with the appropriate code.

If you have questions, contact Albert Endres, (503) 378-5975. ■

Vinyl siding: Do you know how to install it?

by Tony Clifton

When doing field inspections (primarily alternate construction and consumer assistance), we will inspect installation of vinyl siding closely. Vinyl is often improperly installed. Some of the problems: securement is overspaced, fasteners are not secured to framing, siding is not installed to allow it to expand and contract (fasteners are too tight, cut too long, misplaced), or the vapor barrier has not been installed.

These costly errors can (and should be) eliminated by simply following the manufacturers' installation instructions.

Bottom line: Think about what you are doing; if you're not sure, contact the manufacturer of the product or home. If you have questions on this issue, please call Dwight West, (503) 378-2620. ■

Send in your letters to the editor

Send letters to Editor, Manufactured Home Update, Building Codes Division, P.O. Box 14470, Salem OR 97309-0404. You may fax letters to (503) 378-4101. ■

Sloppy storage can cost you money

by Mark Campion, inspector

Inclement weather can bring about delays in setting homes. Open stock production can also account for extra homes sitting in transporter and manufacturer storage yards.

Homes in storage must meet temporary placement standards in the Oregon Manufactured Dwelling Standard. If a home is to be stored beyond 30 days, supports are required under the I-beams with two feet of each end and within eight feet of the front and rear axles.

The standard is not specific about the makeup of piers and pads, but Building Codes will accept piers and pads

made from 2x6 material, and metal piers with common pre-cut preservative-treated footing pads. Please make sure shipping plastic is intact and that all windows and doors are secured.

If you receive written notice that one of your homes is out of compliance with the storage standard, please make the required corrections and notify Building Codes Division. Failure to do so can result in reinspection fees at \$55 an hour for time and travel. Please keep track of your homes and inspect them periodically. If you have any questions, contact Mark Campion, (503) 378-4530. ■

Homes in storage: Treat them right

by Albert Endres

I have been around long enough to understand all of the different reasons, excuses, scenarios, and failures for not blocking and protecting homes in storage lots, but it still amazes me when I see what appears to be near-total disregard in caring for homes. You all know there is a requirement to block and protect from the weather homes stored for more than 30 days. For details, refer to Section 301(o) of the Oregon Manufactured Dwelling Standard.

The owner of the home is responsible to meet this requirement. The owner is typically the retailer or, if the home is an "open" unit, the manufacturer.

We shouldn't even need a regulation concerning the care of these homes. It just makes sense to protect them. Homes not cared for in storage are subject to short-term and long-term damage that leads to expensive repairs.

Beyond that, consider the image: The industry is pretty flat right now, there has been some exposure in the media, and we have continual competition with site-built homes.

How do you think it looks when prospective buyers driving on our freeways and state roads pass storage areas day after to day to see our homes parked in the mud with tails sagging, with torn plastic, and blackberries growing over the hitches?

It seems the burden is on BCD for regulation. Has anyone considered self-policing? We are struggling with personnel cutbacks and must watch our budget. We have other demands on our time. We need your help with this.

I am confident that my staff could check almost any storage area in Oregon or Washington and find homes being damaged by improper storage. Some of these homes are even on the retailers' lots and still they're not protected and blocked.

For those of you taking care of your product: Good job! For others: What is the problem?

Everyone seems to agree that we all created the fix we are in. Storage of the unsold homes is something that we can deal with easily. How about stepping up and doing what is right? ■

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and John Collins. My hat's off to them for a big and mostly thankless job that has helped to improve our industry.

The other inspectors involved were from Oregon State University Extension Service. They are Ted Haskell, Bryan Boe, Larry Giardina, and Dave Brook. Cathy Nuno entered many hours' worth of data and Dave Philbrick handled the behind-the-scenes activity. Many thanks to them all.

We intend to awaken this program when economic times improve. As you may recall from the September issue, we are maintaining a small presence, monitoring and training with the staff of the Building Codes Division. We are also using data from the Building Codes Division's field operations staff, which inspects installations in various areas of the state. ■

New inspector joins the SAA program

by Dwight West

Hello, my name is Dwight West; I have recently joined the SAA program. I will be taking over the Alternate Construction Program and Remanufactured Program for Tony Clifton. He left the SAA program December 1 to work out of the field office in The Dalles.

You can reach me at (503) 378-2620 or send a fax to me at (503) 378-4101.

I have been in the construction business for 17 years, the past 11 of them in the manufactured housing industry. I started as a quality control inspector for one of the local manufacturers in 1989 and began my employment with the State of Oregon Building Codes Division in 1993 as an in-plant inspector. During the past seven years, I have worked with the federal government conducting in-plant audits throughout the United States.

I am looking forward to the new challenges of this position and to meeting with our customers in the field.

Manufactured Home Update is a regular publication of the Building Codes Division of the Oregon Department of Consumer & Business Services.

Editing, design, and production
DCBS Communications



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