



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.