

July 27, 2019

What you need to know about “Tiny Homes”

L&I frequently receives inquiries regarding the rules and requirements for “tiny homes”.

In Washington State, “tiny homes” must meet the [State Building Code requirements](#) (RCW 19.27.031). Other types of units such as Park Model RVs (PMRV), Recreational Vehicles (RV) and HUD Manufactured Homes are not tiny homes even though people may be living in them.

Please note that while L&I inspects and labels several of these types of structures, or units; cities and counties are responsible for regulating how all structures, or units, including, RV’s, PMRV’s modular buildings and manufactured homes can be used within their jurisdictions. If you have questions about using an RV, PMRV, modular building or manufactured home to live in, please contact your [local building department](#) first. **L&I can only approve the construction of RV’s, PMRV’s and modular buildings; not how they are used or where they can be located.**

Step by step – Getting your tiny home approved by L&I.

Step 1). Determine if your structure, or unit, can be approved by L&I.

- Your structure cannot be approved by L&I if:
 - The home will be used to live in as a *dwelling unit** and –
 - The home is being built on the site where it will be used or
 - The home is a HUD approved manufactured home or
 - The home is converted from something else such as a shipping container, shed or other open framed building (like those found home improvement stores, or ordered online), and the conversion is taking place on the site where it will be used.

** DWELLING UNIT. A single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation.*

Site built, or converted tiny homes are regulated by the local cities and counties, [please contact your local building department with questions about permitting and inspections.](#)

- Your structure can be approved by L&I as a “tiny home” modular building if:
 - The home will be used to live in as a *dwelling unit** (this is the only type of structure approved by L&I to be used as a *dwelling unit**) and –
 - The home is being constructed somewhere other than where it will be used and

- The home is built to the [State Building Code requirements](#).
- The home does not exceed 400 square feet. Note: modular homes can be any size allowable by the building code.

** DWELLING UNIT. A single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation.*

- Your unit can be approved by L&I as a Park Model RV (PMRV) if:
 - The home is primarily designed to provide temporary living quarters for recreational, camping or seasonal use and -
 - The home is built on a single chassis, mounted on wheels so that it can be moved around. PMRV's may be wider than 8'-6" (but must be transportable on the road, contact the Washington State Patrol and Department of Transportation for more information) and
 - The unit does not exceed 400 square feet when set up. If square footage will exceed 400 square feet see the modular building requirements. NOTE: this is not a complete definition. [See WAC 296-150P](#) for complete details.
- Your unit can be approved by L&I as a Recreational Vehicle (RV) if:
 - The home is designed primarily for recreational camping or travel use and -
 - The home no wider than 8'-6" in travel mode and is a vehicular type unit, or built on a vehicle chassis, so that it can be moved around and
 - Does not exceed 400 square feet in area when set up. NOTE: this is not a complete definition. [See WAC 296-150R](#) for complete details.

Step 2). Submit plans showing how you will build your Modular "tiny home", RV or Park Model RV. We will review your plans to the codes and standards that apply. Please see the following fact sheets:

RV's ([RecreationalVehiclesCompletePacket.pdf](#)),

PMRV's ([ParkModelRecreationalVehiclesCompletePacket.pdf](#)),

Modular homes ([TinyHomesCompletePacket.pdf](#)) for additional information.

Step 3). Have your structure, or unit, inspected. Once your plans are approved, we will provide you instructions on how to schedule inspections. You will be charged for the time and mileage to do the inspection, normally around \$200 each trip (within the state). Two to three trips are typically required.

Modular "home" fact sheet (*also see our information specifically for tiny homes*).

Modular homes are structures, which are used as dwellings and are built somewhere other than where they will be used or installed. They can be mounted on chassis or moved by means of a separate trailer. Modular homes can be installed permanently or moved from place to place but the installation and use always requires permits from the local city or county building department. All modular buildings must meet the requirements of the Washington State Building Code and must be inspected and approved by

Labor & Industries. Any foundation system for a modular home, including types such as a chassis, post & pier, footing & stem wall, etc. must be permitted, reviewed and approved by the local building department. Modular homes can be of any size and shape within the broad limits of the building code.

To have your modular home approved by L&I, first prepare construction plans for your home showing that it will meet the requirements of the Washington State Building code. You can find out more about the codes that apply to your project at the [Washington State Building Code website](#). If you are unfamiliar with building code requirements or with construction techniques, you will need to employ a design professional such as a Professional Engineer or Architect to help you.

The plans must include floor plans, elevations, cross sections, structural details, truss drawings foundation/anchoring plans, plumbing, mechanical and electrical drawing.

The structural portions of the plans must be stamped by a Washington State registered Professional Engineer or Architect and include a basic structural analysis showing the building meets the minimum structural design requirements of the building code. Other non-structural drawings such as electrical and plumbing drawings are not required to be stamped except when they have been prepared by a licensed architect or engineer.

Modular homes must also meet the requirements of the Washington State Energy Code. Information on the energy code can be found at the [Energy WSU website](#). The web site also has the compliance forms that need to be filled out and submitted with your plans.

When your plans are ready, mail us three complete sets of plans, calculations and supporting documents. A packet of information with the forms, and more detailed information on modular buildings can be found on the L&I website ([ModularBuildingCompletePacket.pdf](#)) or for Tiny Homes ([TinyHomesCompletePacket.pdf](#))

New modular plans are put in line for review and normally there is a backlog of several weeks before we start reviewing them. If the plans examiner has questions or needs additional information, we will contact you directly. Once we have reviewed and approved your plans, you will be able to have us inspect your modular home. Depending on the complexity of your home there will be two or more inspections while you are building it. Inspections are about \$200 each (in state) depending on how far the inspector has to travel. The inspector will verify that the modular home meets the requirements of the Washington State Building Code and once your home has passed inspection, he will put the Washington State Modular insignia (gold seal) on the unit.

The work on all electrical and plumbing systems must be performed by Washington State licensed electricians and plumbers with some exceptions for owners working on their own property as allowed by RCW 19.28 and RCW 18.106.

RV fact sheet for units built by an individual or small manufacturer.

Recreational Vehicles (RV's) are trailers or motorized vehicles used for recreational camping or travel and must meet the requirements found in the NFPA 1192 Standard on Recreational Vehicles. RV's must be a licensed legal vehicle so they cannot be over 8'-6" wide or 14' in height when in travel mode and they cannot exceed 400 square feet in set up mode (fifth wheel units are limited to 430 square feet).

While most RV's are built by specialized factories, individuals can also build an RV. Whether you are building an RV for your personal use or you are a small business located in Washington State that is building RV's for in-state consumers, you will need to have your RV inspected and approved by L&I. RV's being built for sale or lease in Washington must pass L&I inspections and have a Washington State RV label. If you are building an RV for your personal use you should have it inspected and labelled by L&I so that it can be licensed and insured. Sometimes people use existing vehicles in alternate ways. L&I is only involved with vehicle conversions if systems such as 110/120V electrical, propane gas, or plumbing systems are added.

To have your RV approved by L&I, first obtain a copy of the NFPA 1192 standard and the UPA-1 plan guide from NFPA.org or the RVIA.org bookstore. Next, prepare construction plans for your RV using the UPA-1 as a guide. The plan set should include the drawings listed in the UPA-1 and show all relevant information as outlined in the guide. You can omit any information that is not applicable to your design. Your plans do not need to be stamped by an engineer or architect.

When your plans are ready, mail us two copies along with all supporting documents. A packet of information with the forms, and more detailed information on recreational vehicles can be found on the L&I website ([RecreationalVehiclesCompletePacket.pdf](#))

New RV plans are put in line for review and normally there is a backlog of several weeks before we start reviewing them. If the plans examiner has questions or needs additional information, we will contact you directly. Once we have reviewed and approved your plans, you will be able to have us inspect your RV. Depending on the complexity of your RV there will be one or more inspections while you are building it. Inspections are about \$200 each (in state) depending on how far the inspector has to travel. The inspector will verify that the RV meets the requirements of the NFPA 1192 standard and once your RV has passed inspection, he will put the Washington State RV insignia on the unit.

You are not required to use licensed electricians and plumber for wiring and plumbing systems in RV's, however the plumbing, gas and electrical systems must still be designed, and installed, to code. If you

are not familiar with plumbing and electrical systems, you need to employ licensed professional electricians and plumbers to help you and who will make sure the work is installed to code. L&I cannot advise you on, or help you learn, how to do this work.

PMRV fact sheet for units built by an individual or small manufacturer.

Park Model Recreational Vehicles (PMRV's) are trailers that provide temporary living quarters for recreational, camping or seasonal use and must meet the requirements found in the ANSI A119.5 Park Model Recreational Vehicle Standard. PMRV's must be built on a single permanent chassis, mounted on wheels, and be transportable down the highway. If they exceed 8'-6" in width or 14' in height when in travel mode they will need special transportation permits and may be limited on where and how they can be moved over the road. PMRV's cannot exceed 400 square feet in overall floor area, including projections in set up mode.

While most PMRV's are built by specialized factories, individuals can also build a Park Model RV. Whether you are building a PMRV for your personal use or you are a small business located in Washington State that is building Park Models for in-state consumers, you will need to have your PMRV inspected and approved by L&I. Park Model RV's being built for sale or lease in Washington must pass L&I inspections and have a Washington State PMRV label. If you are building a Park Model RV for your personal use you should have it inspected and labelled by L&I so that it can be licensed and insured.

To have your Park Model RV approved by L&I, first obtain a copy of the ANSI A119.5 standard and the UPA-1 plan guide from the RVIA.org bookstore. Next, prepare construction plans for your PMRV using the UPA-1 as a guide. The plan set should include the drawings listed in the UPA-1 and show all relevant information as outlined in the guide. In addition, if your PMRV is over 8'-6" wide you need to provide structural drawings, such as cross sections, framing details, truss drawings and elevations showing that the roof, walls, floor and chassis meet the construction requirements of chapter 5 in the ANSI standard. Other structural designs can be approved, when stamped by a Washington State registered Professional Engineer or Architect.

When your plans are ready, mail us two copies along with all supporting documents. A packet of information with the forms, and more detailed information on recreational vehicles can be found on the L&I website ([ParkModelRecreationalVehiclesCompletePacket.pdf](#))

New PMRV plans are put in line for review and usually there is a backlog of several weeks before we start the review. If the plans examiner has questions or needs additional information, we will contact you directly. Once we have reviewed and approved your plans, you will be able to have us inspect your PMRV. Depending on the complexity of your PMRV there will be two or more inspections while you are building it. Inspections are about \$200 each (in state) depending on how far the inspector has to travel. The inspector will verify that the PMRV meets the requirements of the ANSI A119.5 standard and once your PMRV has passed inspection, he will put the Washington State Park Model RV insignia on the unit.

You are not required to use licensed electricians and plumber for wiring and plumbing systems in PMRV's, however the plumbing, gas and electrical systems must still be designed and installed to code. If you are not familiar with plumbing and electrical systems, you need to employ licensed professional electricians and plumbers to help you and who will make sure the work is installed to code. L&I cannot advise you on or help you learn how to do this work.