

## What you need to know about “Tiny Homes” vs a Tiny House.

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

Units such as Park Model RVs (PMRV), Recreational Vehicles (RV) and HUD Manufactured Homes are not tiny houses or tiny houses with wheels, as defined in WA State. Conversationally folks will often call all of these types of units “tiny homes”. This can create confusion during the approval and placement/use processes. In Washington State, tiny houses, and tiny houses with wheels, must meet the [State Building Code requirements](#) (RCW 19.27.031) – based on ESSB 5383-2019. Tiny houses that fall under L&I authority are regulated as factory assembled structures. Factory built housing has long been called by terms such as modular housing/modular home as well.

Please note that while L&I inspects and labels various types of structures or units, local towns, cities and counties are responsible for regulating how all structures, or units can be used within their jurisdictions. This includes RV’s, PMRV’s, modular buildings and manufactured homes. 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 house approved by L&I.

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

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

*\* 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 houses/tiny houses with wheels 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 house/tiny house with wheels under the factory built housing (modular home) rules if:
  - The structure is designed as a *dwelling unit\** (factory built housing/modular home is the only type of structure approved by L&I to be used as a *dwelling unit\**), and
  - The structure is being constructed somewhere other than where it will be used, and

- The structure is designed and built to the [current WA State Building Code requirements](#), and
- The structure does not exceed 400 square feet. *Note: Other modular buildings can be any size allowable by the building code, and as allowed by the local building department where they will be placed.*

NOTE: this is not a complete definition. [See WAC 296-150F](#) for complete details.

*\* 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 unit is primarily designed to provide temporary living quarters for recreational, camping or seasonal use, and
  - The unit 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 factory built housing/modular building requirements.
  - The unit is designed and built to the requirements of the current version of the ANSI/RVIA 119.5 Standard for Park Model Recreational Vehicles.

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 unit is designed primarily for recreational camping or travel use, and
  - The unit is 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.
  - The unit is designed and built to the requirements of the current version of the NFPA 1192 Standard for Recreational Vehicles.

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 Home- Tiny House, or your RV or Park Model RV. We will review your plans in accordance with the codes and standards that apply. Please see the following fact sheets:

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

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

Factory Built Housing/Modular Homes ([TinyHouseCompletePacket.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.

**NOTE- There is no process for structures or units under L&I authority to be approved "after the fact". Plans must be submitted prior to construction, and inspections must be completed at the factory location, prior to the issuance of an L&I FAS Insignia.**

**Factory built housing fact sheet** (also see our information specifically for tiny houses):

Factory built housing (aka modular homes) are structures, which are designed as dwellings and are built somewhere other than where they will be used or installed. They may be mounted on a chassis or moved by means of a separate trailer/vehicle. Modular homes can be installed permanently, or moved from place to place, but the installation and use require permits from the local town, 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; tiny houses must be no larger than 400 square feet.

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 drawings.

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 Houses [TinyHouseCompletePacket.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 structure 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. 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](#)). As an individual person manufacturing your own RV the key components will be a plan approval application & fee, plans (to the standards and rules shown in the WAC 150R – which is included in the packet), inspections (after plan approval) and an insignia application and fee (so it can be applied at final inspection approval). You can ignore the information regarding factory processes, quality control manuals, etc.

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 plumbers 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. 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](#)). As an individual person manufacturing your own PMRV the key components will be a plan approval application & fee, plans (to the standards and rules shown in the WAC 150R – which is included in the packet), inspections (after plan approval) and an insignia application and fee (so it can be applied at final inspection approval). You can ignore the information regarding factory processes, quality control manuals, etc.

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 plumbers 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.