



Planning and Community Development

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Director's Interpretation Tiny Houses on Wheels / Park Model RV's

Subject: Tiny Houses on Wheels as defined by Port Townsend Municipal Code versus WA Department of Labor & Industries

Applicable codes: Chapter 17.58 Tiny Houses on Wheels and Tiny House on Wheel Communities

Date: June 5, 2023

Discussion of the issue:

The City recently amended Title 17 adding a chapter on Tiny Houses on Wheels. The new chapter, Chapter 17.58, defines these units and allows them to be used as accessory dwelling units, employer provided housing, and as tiny homes on wheels communities. These units must meet ANSI standards for Park Model RV's and additional design standards.

The Washington Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) regulates the **construction** of both Park Model RVs and factory built Tiny Houses, while the City of Port Townsend regulates the **placement and use** of these units. Since Port Townsend's definition of a Tiny House on Wheels (THOW) is different than WA State's definition, some clarification is required.

- Park Models: According to Washington State, a park model is constructed to ANSI standards, bears a blue L&I insignia, and has a vehicle identification number (VIN).
- Tiny Houses: According to Washington State, a factory built tiny house or tiny house on wheels must meet State Building Code requirements and bears a gold insignia, which is the same insignia for modular housing.

Port Townsend Municipal Code is different than WA State Code in that it defines a Tiny House on Wheels (THOW) as meeting the Park Model ANSI standard. Additionally, PTMC 17.58 does not reference THOWs constructed to State Building Code.

Questions within scope for this interpretation include:

1. Are Tiny Houses on Wheels constructed to State Building Code and bearing the gold L&I insignia allowable as an Accessory Dwelling Unit, within a Tiny House on Wheel Community, or as employer provided housing?

Analysis: The Definition of Tiny House on Wheels in 17.58.020 PTMC contains certain criteria relating to size, license and registration with the Department of Motor Vehicles, ANSI construction and design criteria requirements in 17.58.030 (intended to closely match the State Building and Energy Code), is towable and not designed to move under its own power, is sized suitably for public highway travel, has at least 150 square feet of first floor living space, does not exceed 16 feet in height, and is a detached self-contained unit with basic functional areas for cooking, sleeping, and sanitation.

L&I reviews and inspects Tiny House on Wheel Units to ensure consistency with State Building Code. These units would meet and exceed the provisions in 17.58.020 PTMC, and are therefore consistent with Chapter 17.58 PTMC and would not need to prove compliance with the design standards in 17.58.030 so long as it bears a valid gold insignia from L&I. To be established as a THOW, the unit must remain on wheels when delivered to the site upon which it will be used. These units would be subject to the City's permitting process for utility connection and site plan review similar to those that are park model RV's.

2. Are Tiny Houses on Wheels constructed to State Building Code and bearing the gold L&I insignia and placed on a foundation allowable per the Tiny House on Wheels Chapter 17.58 PTMC?

Analysis: Tiny Houses on Wheels bearing a gold L&I insignia may be placed on a foundation so long as they go through the City's foundation permitting process similar to manufactured and modular homes. Once placed on a foundation, these units are considered no different than a modular home; therefore, Chapter 17.58 PTMC does not apply. Modular units are allowed in all of the residential zones. Modular units may be used as accessory or primary dwelling units.

Conclusion: The City's definition of Tiny Houses on Wheels is synonymous with L&I's definition of "Park Model RV" constructed to ANSI code. These units are issued a blue insignia bearing the vehicle's VIN number.

The City's definition of Tiny House on Wheels per 17.58.020 PTMC is expanded to include Tiny Houses on Wheels bearing a gold L&I insignia so long as the units remain on wheels. These units are not subject to 17.58.030 PTMC Design Standards . Tiny Houses on Wheels that are not built to the IRC standards must remain on wheels and cannot be placed on a permanent foundation.

Tiny Houses on Wheels bearing a gold L&I insignia and attached to a permanent foundation, permitted by the City, are considered modular units and may be allowed in accordance with the Zoning Use tables for the respective zone. Chapter 17.58 PTMC may not be used for these units.



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June 5, 2023

Date