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Tiny House – Code and Land Use Standards
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Tiny Houses have been included in several recent Maine laws that impact the construction and placement of such homes in the State. This memo is to provide clarification to Code Officials on code and land use standards associated.

WHAT IS A TINY HOUSE - There are two potential types of tiny home:

- constructed on a trailer that may be mobile and potentially moved from where it was constructed to a site for use as a “dwelling unit for human occupancy”.
- constructed on a site in a more traditional stick-built manner, but meeting certain size standards established in the laws and codes adopted.

Tiny Homes is defined in Statute as:

80-C. Tiny home. "Tiny home" means a living space permanently constructed on a frame or chassis and designed for use as permanent living quarters that:

A. Complies with American National Standards Institute standard A 119.5 on plumbing, propane, fire and life safety and construction or National Fire Protection Association standard 1192 on plumbing, propane and fire and life safety for recreational vehicles; [PL 2019, c. 650, §1 (NEW).]

B. Does not exceed 400 square feet in size; [PL 2019, c. 650, §1 (NEW).]

C. Does not exceed any dimension allowed for operation on a public way under this Title; and [PL 2019, c. 650, §1 (NEW).]

D. Is a vehicle without motive power. [PL 2019, c. 650, §1 (NEW).]

"Tiny home" does not include a trailer, semitrailer, camp trailer, recreational vehicle or manufactured housing.

[PL 2019, c. 650, §1 (NEW).]

As defined, this applies to those constructed on a frame or chassis and considered within the Motor Vehicle regulations and will require a TITLE similar to an RV or other motor vehicle intended for use on public ways. This would assume that the unit would be constructed to and inspected to standards in ANSI A119.5 or NFPA 1192. These standards contain many regulations that address all components of the unit associated with a mobile unit served by

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interior plumbing, heating, cooking, and living to be used as living quarters. This type of construction's interior layout, structural or rough in are not the responsibility of the LPI/Code Officer. These items will be covered under the titling requirements as identified above. The only task of an LPI/CEO is to assess the placement relative to local zoning and connection to on-site systems and utilities.

The second type of tiny home would be a structure constructed under the same codes and standards as a larger, more traditional dwelling and on a foundation, but still meeting the size limitation of less than 400 SF. This is identified in the MUBEC rules under the IRC (Chapter 5) which would be allowed the use of Appendix V (attached.) Appendix V provides some code exceptions that have been approved to accommodate the limited size and deemed to provide an acceptable level of safety for the occupants. This type of construction would be subject to all other utility codes adopted by the State of Maine, to include but not limited to, the Maine Internal Plumbing code, State Electrical codes and Fuel Gas codes.

The result of both types provides a completed unit intended for permanent occupancy and would be considered as a Single-Family Dwelling. In both cases, the units would be subject to all normally required on-site facilities and associated utilities to provide for permanent occupancy. This would include the provisions for connection to a potable water supply, sanitary facilities and any required utilities to provide for the safety of the occupants of the unit or structure. This would include compliance with appropriate municipal connections or on-site sanitation and drinking water.

As a result of confusion on placement of tiny homes relative to local zoning, the most recent legislation (below) addresses the issue. Tiny homes are now to be considered as permanent dwelling units subject to the same local zoning regulations as other single-family dwellings. The intent was to provide definition of the use of tiny homes. As stated in statute, all other aspects of local zoning would apply equally to tiny homes.

Please note that other questions about the new law relative to the condition of a home or its placement, may arise in the future, but the only significant change is to the recognition that either type should be considered the same as any other primary single family dwelling. The features of the structure regarding size and construction would be subject to the codes and standards above, but placement on site is based on your local zoning ordinance relative to setbacks and lot size. Before a community is asked to grant a permit for a tiny home you should consult with your local attorney relative to your specific ordinances and any further limitations they may contain.

This memo is intended for informational purposes only and should not be considered a legal opinion.

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H.P. 1134 - L.D. 1530

An Act To Allow People To Live in Tiny Homes as a Primary or Accessory Dwelling

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 30-A MRSA §4363 is enacted to read:

§4363. Regulation of tiny homes

1. Definition. For the purposes of this section, "tiny home" has the same meaning as in Title 29-A, section 101, subsection 80-C.

2. Location of tiny homes. A municipality shall permit a tiny home to be placed or erected on an individual house lot where single-family dwellings are allowed or as an accessory structure, subject to all applicable land use requirements as single-family dwellings or as an accessory structure.

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2015 International Residential Code

APPENDIX V TINY HOUSES

CHAPTER PART AV101— GENERAL

AV101.1 Scope. This appendix shall be applicable to tiny houses used as single dwelling units. Tiny houses shall comply with this code except as otherwise stated in this appendix.

CHAPTER PART AV102— DEFINITIONS

AV102.1 General. The following words and terms shall, for the purposes of this appendix, have the meanings shown herein. Refer to Chapter 2 of this code for general definitions.

EGRESS ROOF ACCESS WINDOW. A skylight or roof window designed and installed to satisfy the emergency escape and rescue opening requirements in Section R310.2.

LANDING PLATFORM. A landing provided as the top step of a stairway accessing a loft.

LOFT. A floor level located more than 30 inches (762 mm) above the main floor and open to it on at least one side with a ceiling height of less than 6 feet 8 inches (2032 mm), used as a living or sleeping space.

TINY HOUSE. A dwelling that is 400 square feet (37 m²) or less in floor area excluding lofts.

CHAPTER PART AV103— CEILING HEIGHT

AV103.1 Minimum ceiling height. Habitable space and hallways in tiny houses shall have a ceiling height of not less than 6 feet 8 inches (2032 mm). Bathrooms, toilet rooms, and kitchens shall have a ceiling height of not less than 6 feet 4 inches (1930 mm). Obstructions shall not extend below these minimum ceiling heights including beams, girders, ducts, lighting and other obstructions.

Exception: Ceiling heights in lofts are permitted to be less than 6 feet 8 inches (2032 mm).

CHAPTER PART AV104— LOFTS

AV104.1 Minimum loft area and dimensions. Lofts used as a sleeping or living space shall meet the minimum area and dimension requirements of Sections AV104.1.1 through AV104.1.3.

AV104.1.1 Minimum area. Lofts shall have a floor area of not less than 35 square feet (3.25 m²).

AV104.1.2 Minimum dimensions. Lofts shall be not less than 5 feet (1524 mm) in any horizontal dimension.

AV104.1.3 Height effect on loft area. Portions of a loft with a sloping ceiling measuring less than 3 feet (914 mm) from the finished floor to the finished ceiling shall not be considered as contributing to the minimum required area for the loft.

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Exception: Under gable roofs with a minimum slope of 6:12, portions of a loft with a sloping ceiling measuring less than 16 inches (406 mm) from the finished floor to the finished ceiling shall not be considered as contributing to the minimum required area for the loft.

AV104.2 Loft access. The access to and primary egress from lofts shall be any type described in Sections AV104.2.1 through AV104.2.4.

AV104.2.1 Stairways. Stairways accessing lofts shall comply with this code or with Sections AV104.2.1.1 through AV104.2.1.5.

AV104.2.1.1 Width. Stairways accessing a loft shall not be less than 17 inches (432 mm) in clear width at or above the handrail. The minimum width below the handrail shall be not less than 20 inches (508 mm).

AV104.2.1.2 Headroom. The headroom in stairways accessing a loft shall be not less than 6 feet 2 inches (1880 mm), as measured vertically, from a sloped line connecting the tread or landing platform nosings in the middle of their width.

AV104.2.1.3 Treads and risers. Risers for stairs accessing a loft shall be not less than 7 inches (178 mm) and not more than 12 inches (305 mm) in height. Tread depth and riser height shall be calculated in accordance with one of the following formulas:

1. The tread depth shall be 20 inches (508 mm) minus 4/3 of the riser height, or
2. The riser height shall be 15 inches (381 mm) minus 3/4 of the tread depth.

AV104.2.1.4 Landing platforms. The top tread and riser of stairways accessing lofts shall be constructed as a landing platform where the loft ceiling height is less than 6 feet 2 inches (1880 mm) where the stairway meets the loft. The landing platform shall be 18 inches to 22 inches (457 to 559 mm) in depth measured from the nosing of the landing platform to the edge of the loft, and 16 to 18 inches (406 to 457 mm) in height measured from the landing platform to the loft floor.

AV104.2.1.5 Handrails. Handrails shall comply with Section R311.7.8.

AV104.2.1.6 Stairway guards. Guards at open sides of stairways shall comply with Section R312.1.

AV104.2.2 Ladders. Ladders accessing lofts shall comply with Sections AV104.2.1 and AV104.2.2.

AV104.2.2.1 Size and capacity. Ladders accessing lofts shall have a rung width of not less than 12 inches (305 mm) and 10 inches (254 mm) to 14 inches (356 mm) spacing between rungs. Ladders shall be capable of supporting a 200 pound (75 kg) load on any rung. Rung spacing shall be uniform within 3/8-inch (9.5 mm).

AV104.2.2.2 Incline. Ladders shall be installed at 70 to 80 degrees from horizontal.

AV104.2.3 Alternating tread devices. Alternating tread devices accessing lofts shall comply with Sections R311.7.11.1 and R311.7.11.2. The clear width at and below the handrails shall be not less than 20 inches (508 mm).

AV104.2.4 Ships ladders. Ships ladders accessing lofts shall comply with Sections R311.7.12.1 and R311.7.12.2. The clear width at and below handrails shall be not less than 20 inches (508 mm).

AV104.2.5 Loft Guards. Loft guards shall be located along the open side of lofts. Loft guards shall not be less than 36 inches (914 mm) in height or one-half of the clear height to the ceiling, whichever is less.

CHAPTER PART AV105— EMERGENCY ESCAPE AND RESCUE OPENINGS

AV105.1 General. Tiny houses shall meet the requirements of Section R310 for emergency escape and rescue openings.

Exception: Egress roof access windows in lofts used as sleeping rooms shall be deemed to meet the requirements of Section R310 where installed such that the bottom of the opening is not more than 44 inches (1118 mm) above the loft floor, provided the egress roof access window complies with the minimum opening area requirements of Section R310.2.1.