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A LOOK BACK TO THE FUTURE OF MODULAR CONSTRUCTION

Modular Construction Then and Now

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THE HISTORY OF MODULAR CONSTRUCTION

A. What is Modular Construction?

Modular construction is a system of building a structure that assembles sections or modules of that structure off-site in a manufacturing plant, and then transports and assembles the sections or modules on site. The modules are often compared to building blocks or legos that “click” together on site to form a cohesive and complete structure. Modular construction can be as simple as a single module mobile home or trailer to a complex multi-module and multi-story hospital, hotel, or apartment complex.

B. The First Applications of Modular Construction.

The first modular construction is often associated with the model home kits sold by retailers such as the Sears Roebuck Company. Sears Roebuck was, in fact, one of the earlier manufacturers of these preassembled homes. They were prevalent in the early 1900s as the United States expanded west, but it was actually a company called E.F. Hodgson that is recognized as the early inventor of these preassembled homes and advertised their sales through a catalogue of homes.

Demand for modular homes rose in the post World War II era as soldiers returned home. The housing boom that resulted when these returning soldiers started families in homes of their own led to a need for quick and affordable housing, and modular construction certainly fit that bill.

Although single family homes are the most widely known use of modular construction throughout the 1900s, modular construction was also being used in the commercial context as early as the 1960s. In Cleveland, Ohio, for example, a company called Forest City Enterprises, which began as a wholesaler of construction materials, moved into the real estate development business and built several office buildings using preassembled modular units that were constructed off-site and then hauled to the project site.

C. Modular Construction Regulations in the Modern Era.

Today, there are seemingly no limits to what can be done with modular construction. Although the biggest limitation remains size restrictions for shipping, modular construction has come a long way from the box-type prefabricated homes of the past. From high-rise hotels in downtown Manhattan, to curtain wall-fronted mixed use multi-story buildings, and luxury single family homes—the options for modular construction continue to grow every day.

D. Regulations for Modular Construction.

As modular construction continues to grow in popularity and complexity, states are continuing to add more and more regulation relating to the modular units, separate and apart from standard on-site building inspections. The following is a state-by-state guide to regulations relating specifically to modular construction.

<i>State</i>	<i>Does the state regulate modular homes? Yes/No</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Alabama	Yes	Alabama Manufactured Housing Commission Administrative Code Chapter 535-x-11
Alaska	No	Regulated by county or municipal governments
Arizona	Yes	Ariz. Admin. Code § 4-34-204 - § 4-34-805
Arkansas	Yes	066.01.21 Ark Code R. § 001
California	Yes	Cal. Health & Safety Code § 19960 -19997; Cal. Code Reg. Tit. 25, § 3000-3082.
Colorado	Yes	Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 24-32-3303, 24-32-3304, 24-32-3305, 24-32-3311; 8 Colo. Code Reg 1302-14
Connecticut	No	Conn. Gen. Stat. § 21-85 - §21-89. Reserved statutes for future use, but only current regulations are related to manufacturer's warranty
Delaware	No	
Florida	No	Same as Florida Building Code, only requires modular homes to have an insignia of the Florida Department of Community Affairs and to be installed by a licensed contractor by the Construction Industry Licensing Board

Georgia	Yes	Ga. Code §§ 8-2-110 - 8-2-121
Hawaii	No	
Idaho	Yes	Idaho Code, Title 39, Ch. 43; IDAPA Rule 07.03.03
Illinois	Yes	430 ILCS 115; Illinois Modular Dwelling and Mobile Structure Safety Act, Ill. Admin. Code tit. 77, § 880
Indiana	No	Regulated by county or municipal governments
Iowa	Yes	Iowa Admin. Code r. 661-16.610(103A)
Kansas	No	Regulated by county or municipal governments
Kentucky	No	
Louisiana	No	Adopted International Building Code (IBC), La. Stat. Ann. § 51:911.22
Maine	Yes	Code Me. R. 02-385 Ch. 110
Maryland	No	Adopted International Building Code (IBC) may be further regulated by local governments.
Massachusetts	Yes	780 Code Mass. Regs. 110.R3
Michigan	No	Same code requirements as stick built homes

Minnesota	Yes	Minn. R. Ch 1361 incorporates the model rules and regulations by the Interstate Industrialized Buildings Commission's Interstate Compact (IIBC)
Mississippi	No	
Missouri	Yes	Mo. Code Regs. Section 20 CSR 4240-123
Montana	No	Same code requirements as stick built homes
Nebraska	Yes	Neb. Admin. Code Section 291-13
Nevada	No	
New Hampshire	No	Same code requirements as stick built homes
New Jersey	Yes	N.J.A.C. 5:23-4A.1 Incorporates IIBC
New Mexico	No	
New York	No	Same code requirements as stick built homes
North Carolina	Yes	N.C.G.S. 143-139.1
North Dakota	Yes	N.D.C.C. 54-21.4 Incorporates IIBC
Ohio	No	Same code requirements as stick built homes
Oklahoma	No	
Oregon	Yes	OAR 918-674

Pennsylvania	No	Same code requirements as stick built homes
Rhode Island	Yes	R.I. SBC-1 426.422.1 Incorporates IIBC
South Carolina	Yes	S.C. Code 23-43
South Dakota	No	
Tennessee	Yes	Tenn. Code 68-126-301
Texas	No	Same code requirements as stick built homes
Utah	Yes	Utah Code 15A-1-301 Must comply with HUD Code
Vermont	No	Same code requirements as stick built homes
Virginia	No	Same code requirements as stick built homes
Washington	Yes	WAC 296-150F
West Virginia	No	
Wisconsin	Yes	WI Uniform Dwelling Code SPS 320.01
Wyoming	No	