

You Can't Fix It Till You Know It's Broken

By George Porter

This month's topic can apply to a lot of things in the installation and repair of manufactured housing. The bottom line is you have to know what is correct before you can see that there is a need for change or repair.

An example of this would be anchors. If you think that the things are a result of some stupid government regulation and nothing is going to keep one of these homes on the ground in a tornado anyway, then you don't see the problem and you will not ever contribute to the solution. You won't care if the anchor is the right type for the soil, or what the torque reading is, or the stabilizer plate, or anything else that may be necessary to make the system work. If you just screw or pound some handy chunk of iron into the ground because some reg. says you have to, then you are right, probably anchors don't work, at least in your case.

One of the main problems with anchors in my opinion is that they are seldom tested. 99.99% of the anchors installed in the nation have never had a tug on them. They just sit there in the ground under the home and wait. When they are subjected to a test such as a storm with winds over 70 mph most don't do too well. To some this is the proof that anchors don't work and they are not going to knock themselves out doing some longwinded procedure on anchoring for nothing. Remember this: "An anchor that is installed 95% correctly has a 95% chance of failure". Being close only counts in horseshoes, hand grenades, and skunk fights. Anchoring is more like math, it is usually either right or wrong, but you might get lucky.

The solution to this national problem is not more rules, it is education. Installers need to know more about how these systems work. Anchoring is part of a home foundation system, The piers hold the home up and the anchors hold it down. It takes both to meet the requirements of wind zones I, II, and III. There are entire states that by regulation do not require anchoring on HUD Code homes. There are many more states that have no laws at all concerning anything that has to do with manufactured housing installation. There are states that have laws but no enforcement power but there are very few states that actually show people how and what to do. Of these very few states none of them are exactly like each other. Add this to the 10,000 counties and towns that have dreamed up there own set-up and anchoring regulations and it is no wonder the crews that do the work usually pay little attention to any of it. They figure their chances of meeting the local regulations are hard enough without having to be responsible for it actually working correctly. It becomes a matter of economic survival to do what is necessary to get paid. If the customer wants to see anchors in the ground then stick some in, the customer doesn't care what kind as long as he sees anchors. Many inspectors feel the same way, they drive up, look for a few anchors and blocks, then move on. The details take too much time.