

Sales Lot Set-up

By George Porter

This is the time of year to think about homes on the sales lot. This is especially true if your sales center is in a northern climate. Most people think the set-up of a model on a sales lot is not so important. You sort of get it level and propped up with any old stuff lying around. There is no reason to do a great job because no one is living in it and it's only temporary anyway.

Well guess what, gravity, wind, and water have the same effect on homes on the sales lot as they do homes on the customer's lot. Plus there are a few extra problems that only happen on the sales lot.

For instance:

Winterizing: Did you know that most, if not all, manufacturers test their plumbing with water? They fill the lines with water and put pressure on them for a period of time to check for leaks. In the winter months they winterize the home after they do this test by blowing the lines out and pumping in some antifreeze. They do not do this winterizing from the Spring through the early Fall. If you have a home that you ordered in June, left over on your lot in a northern area of the country, then you better check it out, or you might be replacing some broken water lines due to ice. (I have often thought that this might be what loosened the aluminum rings on the polybutylene piping we can't use any more) Manufacturers always put a warning in the home when it has not been winterized, but I think maybe not all the paper work gets the attention it deserves sometimes.

So go out on your sales lot right now and see if all your homes have antifreeze in the toilets and sinks, you could save yourself some trouble.

Proper blocking Correct me if I am mistaken, but I bet there is just as much snow on the roof of a sales lot house as on any other home roof in the area. This being the case, why would it not need proper support to hold that load without cracking the drywall or crowning the floor just as it would with any other house. I can count on one hand the number of dealers that correctly block the marriage line of a home on the sales lot. Yet, these same dealers that do not block the centerline on the lot will block it when someone buys the home. As much as we don't like to admit it, some of us have had the same home, or homes, set-up on our sales lot for a year or longer. Not supporting it properly is a good way to make a multi-section not fit well in the middle or bow the floor joists at the ridge beam support columns along the centerline.

There is one manufacturer of a certain style of single section home that has the off-door side covered with full length windows and skylights. Every one I have seen on sales lots that I ride by is sagging where the windows are located. The glass will not hold up the roof. I know that the manufacturer must have special points along the sidewall that are supposed to be supported so this won't happen, but on the sales lot they just never get blocked. (If I can see this so can the customers)

It is a curious thing that most dealerships will spend lots of money on decorator kits so homes look nice on the lot but they save the good blocking job for when you can't see under the home because of the skirting. There is something about a rag-tag blocking job done with broken blocks and firewood that just doesn't go with the image we are trying to convey on the sales lot. It doesn't inspire consumer confidence and it is not good for the home.

Do the best job possible under the home on the lot and train your sales people to point it out to the customers. Tell the people why it looks like this and what benefit it is to them, it will sell homes for you while it keeps them properly supported.

Anchoring: When was the last time (or even the first time) you saw homes on a sales lot anchored? Somebody once told me that we could avoid a lot of trouble with our homes if we didn't leave them outside so much. While this was his weak attempt at humor there is a point here. Either our homes are inside the factory being built, which incidentally is the best place to build a house, or they are outside exposed to the elements. The homes have to effectively deal with all the elements they encounter from the time they roll through the factory door or they suffer for it. The home itself does not come from the factory ready to deal with these elements, we have to do certain things to help it, and we have to do it on the sales lot the same as anywhere else.

I will never forget the day twenty years ago when my sales lot went through a hurricane. We put the hitches facing into the wind and dropped the whole home down on the ground as low as it would go. The homes were not even blocked but we put some anchors on them anyway. With the air out of the tires the homes were just inches out of the mud and by some miracle they all made it. Lots of my friends in the business lost everything because when one goes they all go. They said it was like a strike in a bowling alley, the one up front got all the rest.

The floor plan insurance paid off for them, but I often wondered if it would have done so as easily today. If some insurance company didn't want to pay out several million for a loss, would they have a case if the homes were not protected by proper anchoring?? I don't know, but if I owned a sales center in hurricane country I would sure ask my insurance carrier, and I would get the answer in writing. Please be aware that anchoring is necessary for all HUD Code housing in all wind zones so this caution might apply to everyone in the country.

Sorry to give you all these things to worry about, next month I promise to give you some good news.