

Some Things Never Change

By George Porter

If you have been following this column then you know that I have had the opportunity to train set-up people in Japan. Besides all the usual problems of language and culture I was sure there would be an additional problem.

For six years I have been teaching the course on Manufactured Housing Installation in forty one states. The basis of the training are the requirements of the factory manuals. These manuals are written so that the homes will meet the performance standards of the HUD code. Here's the problem, there is no such thing as a HUD code in Japan. There are no thermal zones, wind load zones, roof load zones or even a Department of Housing and Urban Development. When you don't have any laws that apply to the homes what do you tell the class that they should do?

After a considerable amount of thought I found that nothing needed to change at all. The HUD Code is a performance code not just a blind recipe for building a house in a certain county or state. All that is necessary is to convert the feet and pounds in the manuals to meters and kilograms. Once you have done that you just tell them to put the homes in the areas of the country where the figures apply.

This was something that I should have known anyway. Gravity, wind, load bearing capacity of soil, and all the other things we deal with here are the same all over the world. You size a footing over there the same way you do it here or in Africa or England.

It is nice to know Mother Nature has the same rules all over the planet. Sometimes man will lose sight of that fact and start making laws about the way he thinks it should be. Man might get away with this illusion for a while but the environment will always eventually show him who is really in charge. The HUD Code is sort of a self adjusting standard that changes when the long term environment changes. If the home goes where the winters are cold then the code changes the thermal standards. If it snows a lot then the standard for the roof load increases. The HUD Code translates easily to any part of the earth and is in perfect harmony with most of the building codes there. It is the only building code in the U.S. that applies to the entire nation. It could also be a world building code, maybe the united nations should think about adopting it because some things never change.