



INVESTIGATION GUIDELINE

Revised 2004
Appendix 123

MANUFACTURED (MOBILE) HOME APPLIANCE FIRES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background Information

Appliances usually marketed for installation in manufactured homes often claim to be "zero clearance" appliances. As a result, minimal amounts of insulation exist between any heat, sparks or embers potentially generated by these appliances and the home structure (floors, walls, ceilings). Restricted living space and access to exits in these types of homes make such hazards potentially fatal.

Investigations will support the work of the Fire / Gas Voluntary Codes and Standards team in developing improvements in the voluntary standards for appliances marketed for manufactured homes.

Please note that this is a guideline, not a checklist. Any relevant information discovered in the course of the investigation should be included regardless of whether it was explicitly requested in this guideline or in the assignment message.

B. Product Design

Appliances installed in manufactured homes may be fueled by electricity, wood, or gas. Heating products may be vented or unvented. Vented gas appliances, such as furnaces and gas space heaters are often installed as a direct-vent system. In a direct-vent system, the intake air brought in from the outdoors and the exhaust air vented to the outdoors takes place within a sealed system; i.e., intake/combustion air is not taken from indoors.

C. Specific Items of Interest

- Obtain the square footage and layout of the manufactured home. If possible, obtain a floorplan from any official



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reports. Label all exits, including any pop-out windows, and the fire's location of origin. Label the locations of any smoke detectors (or indicate if none were present) and note whether they were working.

- Obtain the actual or estimated year the home was manufactured.
- Document the cause of the fire and the first material ignited.

D. Headquarters Contacts

Ronald Jordan	ESFS	301 504-7575
David Miller	EPHA	301 504-7323

II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR COLLECTING SPECIFIC INFORMATION

A. Synopsis

Code investigations involving appliances and manufactured homes with the first product corresponding to the appliance involved in the fire. If appropriate, code the second product as 1841 - *Mobile/manufactured homes*. In any case, include the words *mobile home* or *manufactured home* in the synopsis.

B. Description of the Incident Environment

Pre-incident. Include in this portion of the narrative a description of the specific circumstances leading to the incident. Document who installed the appliance, whether it was purchased new or used, and any repair history of the appliance.

Incident. Describe in the narrative how the fire happened and how the victim was alerted to it. If this is speculative, give the reasons for this particular reconstruction of events.

Post-incident. Include injuries, type of treatment administered, property damage, medical costs and resulting physical limitations. Document the disposition of the appliance and the manufactured home.



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C. Description of the Injured Person(s) and Product Interaction

The narrative should include information on how well the victim(s) understood the products and hazards involved. Indicate if an instruction manual was included with purchase of product and if the victim had read and understood instructions.

D. Description of the Product

- Product description, including age, manufacturer, and model of the appliance, and whether it was new or used when acquired by the consumer.
- Provide the age of the manufactured home.
- If an installed appliance, who installed?
- If a vented appliance, indicate if it was installed as a direct-vent system (i.e., The intake air brought in from the outdoors and the exhaust air vented to the outdoors takes place within a sealed system. Intake air is not taken from indoors). Describe the location where the vent exited the home and if the vents were blocked in any way.
- If a vented appliance, describe the location where the vent(s) exited the home and if the vents were blocked in any way.
- Document any standards markings found on the appliance, in the instruction manual, or recorded by officials.

E. Product Safety Standards

CPSC does not have mandatory standards on manufactured homes, which are themselves under the jurisdiction of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). However, CPSC does have jurisdiction over any consumer product, including appliances, used in manufactured homes.



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III. INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS AND/OR DIAGRAMING FACTORS RELATED TO THE INVESTIGATION

- Photograph or obtain photographs of any standards markings found on the appliance.
- Photograph or obtain photographs of the area where the fire started and the remains of the appliance and any venting system.

IV. INSTRUCTIONS FOR OBTAINING SAMPLES AND DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE INVESTIGATION

- Obtain a copy of the fire department report
- If a fire investigation was performed, obtain a copy of the fire investigation report
- Obtain any police or utility report.
- If an insurance claim was filed as a result of the incident, provide the insurance company, contact, and claim number.
- Try to obtain expert technical reports from insurance companies and forensic engineering firms. If a subpoena is needed, contact David Miller (EPHA) for assistance.