



LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDY: HARNETT COUNTY – ABANDONED MANUFACTURED HOMES PROGRAM

Contact:

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Harnett County has been removing abandoned manufactured homes since 2004 through Project Abandoned Manufactured Home Planning Initiative. Project AMPI was started to aid county residents with the destruction and removal of abandoned manufactured homes on private property. AMPI is tied to the Harnett County Zoning Ordinance, which bans abandoned manufactured homes within its jurisdiction. The county tries to educate citizens of the violation by information on its Web site as well as flyers that are distributed throughout the community.

Abandoned manufactured homes are identified by a Harnett County zoning inspector. The inspections are performed when either an inspector notices what appears to be an abandoned home or from a property owner that has heard about the program and wants to voluntarily comply with the ordinance. If the inspector deems that the home meets Harnett County's criteria of being abandoned, the property owner is notified of the violation through the county's protocols for notification of a violation of the ordinance. There is a thorough records search to ensure correct ownership of the home as well as to make sure the property has not been given up in bankruptcy or involved in legal separation disputes. AMPI allows only one abandoned manufactured home per lot and does not remove homes from mobile home parks. In addition, AMPI does not remove abandoned manufactured homes damaged by fire. This is to ensure that no taxpayer dollars are used to remove a home where the owner received insurance funds to cover their losses.

Harnett County uses contractors to conduct the demolition part of AMPI. There is an application process in selecting contractors and extensive background checks are performed by Harnett County's legal department. Harnett County requires all contractors to sign a scope of service agreement, which provides an outline of services requested and clarifies areas of responsibility of both parties. Currently Harnett County uses four contractors, but many more want to participate. There is a two week bidding process with the lower bidder receiving the project. After the winning contractor is awarded the project, the abandoned home is usually taken down within the next week.

All homes are required to be torn down on site. Any debris coming from the site must be removed by covered trucks to the landfill. In accordance to state law, the contractors are required to remove the mercury switches from the homes and are carried to a licensed HVAC dealer for recycling. No other material is required to be recycled. However, contractors typically sell scrap metal from the homes and the revenues is theirs to keep. This helps keep bids low. Any possible asbestos removal is up to the contractor.

The typical demolition cost of a single-wide manufactured home under AMPI is \$1,300. The funding for AMPI comes from the solid waste fund of the county budget. In FY2007-2008, \$12,000 was initially allocated for the project, but that amount was spent in less than four months. An additional \$20,000 was allotted the same year, for a project budget total of \$32,000. In FY 2008-2009, \$60,000 was allotted, with 90% coming from the solid waste fund and the remaining 10% from homeowners and tipping fees. The program pays for the demolition fees charged by the contractor and the property owner pays upfront the tipping fees that are charged at the landfill. The tipping fees range from \$250-\$450, but if the fees exceed the credited amount the property owner has 30 days to pay the balance.

In 2008-2009 Harnett County demolished 30 abandoned manufactured homes through AMPI with a goal to complete 40 projects before the end of the fiscal year.