

## The ASTM Tiny House Standards Initiative: Update As Of Aug. 28th, 2021



*Photo Courtesy Sunshine Tiny Homes*

### **An Exploratory Initiative With ASTM International**

Janet Thome, the founder and President of Tiny House Alliance USA is leading an exploratory initiative with ASTM International to develop voluntary consensus standards for the tiny house industry.

Janet has gathered a group of interested stakeholders with diverse contributions to gauge the interest of the tiny house industry and we have been meeting with the new business development team of ASTM to voice our opinions regarding the industry, why we need standards, what types of standards are needed and how we could collaborate globally.

We have been preparing for the new business development team to present a proposal to COTCO ( Committee on technical committees operations ), the board that grants new committees. 150 countries will have the possibility of joining our standards development to create uniformity without borders.

Everyone has been invited to our meetings and we have published our intentions.

Together, the stakeholders wrote a proposal that included the title of our committee, the scope, and initial standards and subcommittees to be presented to COTCO.

When and if our committee is approved, we will go through all the official ASTM procedures and protocol and we will elect officers, write bylaws, and every word of the proposal will be voted on and edited by the official committee.

## **The Scope**

*The focus of this committee is the development and maintenance of voluntary consensus standards for tiny houses, with attention to safety, quality, uniformity, reliability, consumer confidence, and ethical business practices, including, but not limited to, best building practices, test methods, certification, a global quality assurance program, requirements and auditing of 3rd parties that provide plan review and inspect tiny houses, tiny house community developments, micro-grid utilities, and minimum construction requirements.*

*The work of this committee will be coordinated with other ASTM technical committees and other national and international organizations having mutual or related interests.*



*Photo Courtesy Wolf Industries*

*We Envision a World Where Legislators, Building Code Officials, Builders and Consumers No Longer Have to Weave the Mass Confusion of Conflicting Codes and Standards for Tiny Houses.*



## **About ASTM International**

ASTM International is one of the largest ANSI Accredited Standards Developers in the world. They have been in existence for over 120 years and have published over 13,000 standards. They have over 140 technical committees made of volunteer stakeholders from all over the world that develop voluntary consensus standards.

*As of 2018, 40% of the ICC building codes were ASTM published referenced standards.*

The founding principles of openness have contributed greatly to the acceptance and use-of the ASTM standard the world over. Known for their high technical quality and market relevance.

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They include Internet-based Standards Development access forums enabling 24/7 worldwide, on-line balloting, electronic minutes and templates, and state-of-the-art distribution methods.

[https://www.astm.org/COMMIT/BOD\\_MSOBJ0410.PDF](https://www.astm.org/COMMIT/BOD_MSOBJ0410.PDF)

### **The History Of ASTM**

A group of scientists and engineers, led by Charles Dudley, formed ASTM in 1898 to address the frequent rail breaks affecting the fast-growing railroad industry. The group developed a standard for the steel used to fabricate rails. Originally called the "American Society for Testing Materials" in 1902, it became the "American Society for Testing And Materials" in 1961. In 2001, ASTM officially changed its name to "ASTM International" and added the tagline "Standards Worldwide". In 2014, it changed the tagline to "Helping our World Work better".

<https://www.zippia.com/astm-international-careers-1083942/history/>

### **What Is ANSI?**

ANSI is not itself a standards-developing organization. Rather, the Institute provides a framework for fair standards development and quality conformity assessment systems and continually works to safeguard their integrity.

And as a neutral venue for coordination of standards-based solutions, the Institute brings together private- and public-sector experts and stakeholders to initiate collaborative standardization activities that respond to national priorities.

ANSI serves as a strong voice on behalf of the US voluntary standards community, protecting and strengthening its impact domestically and internationally. Through its membership, partnerships, and diverse programs and activities, ANSI represents the interests of more than 270,000 companies and organizations and 30 million professionals worldwide.

### **What Is An ANSI Standards Developer?**

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) facilitates the development of American National Standards through the accreditation of procedures used by

standards developers and the approval of standards as American National Standards. To be ANSI-accredited, a standards developer is required to adhere to a set of due process-based requirements or procedures that govern the consensus development process. Due process is key to ensuring that American National Standards are developed in an environment that is equitable, accessible, and responsive to the requirements of various stakeholders.

<https://www.ansi.org/american-national-standards/info-for-standards-developers/standards-developers>

## **What Are The Essential ANSI Requirements?**

### **Essential Requirements For Due Process**

Due process means that any party (organization, company, government agency, individual, etc.) with a direct and material interest has a right to participate by: a) expressing a position and its basis, b) having that position considered, and c) having the right to appeal. Due process allows for equity and fair play. The following constitute the minimum acceptable due process requirements for the development of consensus.

The essential requirements include openness, lack of dominance, balance, coordination and harmonization, notifications of standards developments, considerations of views and objections, consensus vote, appeals, written procedures, and compliance with normative American National Standards policies and administrative procedures.

<https://www.ansi.org/american-national-standards/ans-introduction/essential-requirements>

## **Who Is A Stakeholder?**

A stakeholder is an individual or a business that has a vested interest in an industry that will be affected by decisions that are made for their industry. We have been gathering interested parties including, end users, builders, DIYer's, 3rd party certification agencies, lenders, insurance providers, material manufacturers, appraisers, planners, tiny house organizations, advocates, legislators, and more to add their input to the development of standards for tiny houses. Everyone is welcome.

## **What Is An ASTM Standard?**

A standard is a document that has been developed and established through ASTM's consensus principles and which meet the requirements of their procedures and

regulations. Full consensus standards are developed with the participation of stakeholders with an interest in their development and use.

### **How And Where Are Standards Used?**

ASTM standards are voluntary in that ASTM does not mandate their use. However, government regulators often give voluntary standards the force of law by citing them in laws, regulations, and codes. In the United States, the relationship between private-sector standards developers and the public sector was strengthened with the 1995 passage of the

### **National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act (Public Law 104-113).**

The law requires that government agencies use privately developed standards whenever possible, saving taxpayers millions of dollars by simplifying formerly duplicative standards development efforts.

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-104publ113/html/PLAW-104publ113.htm>

### **How Could The ASTM Tiny House Standards Become Accepted Or Mandated?**

- 1) Laws
- 2) Model Acts
- 3) Ordinances
- 4) Contract Between Two Parties ( A Purchaser And Seller)
- 5) Curriculum
- 6) Quality Assurance Program Manual For A Manufacturer That Is Approved By A Third Party Agency
- 7) A Guide For Municipalities
- 8) Architects And Engineers Use Them In Their Plans
- 9) Government Agencies Around The World Reference Standards In Building Codes
- 10) Regulations
- 11) ASTM Compliance Labels Ensure Manufacturers And Consumer Confidence
- 12) Courts Hold Manufacturers To A Standard
- 11) Design Requirements Agreed Upon By An Industry

### **Six Types Of ASTM Standards**

- 1) Test Method
- 2) Classification
- 3) Terminology
- 4) Guide
- 5) Specification
- 6) Practice

[https://www.astm.org/SUPPORT/Types\\_of\\_standards.pdf](https://www.astm.org/SUPPORT/Types_of_standards.pdf)



## **ASTM Cannabis Standards**

Cannabis is an industry that is very much like the tiny house industry with a "do not regulate me" attitude and a mosaic of rules and regulations all over the place resembling the wild wild west that is now enjoying a modern day gold rush because of the establishment of uniformity through ASTM standards.

The ASTM Cannabis Committee consists of 900 members, from 30 countries that divided their standards development into 9 technical committees.

There are over 75 standards in development.

*The results are noteworthy. The standards addressed quality and safety.*

### **Cannabis Has Developed Standards On:**

Test Methods  
Cultivation

Dispensing  
Lab Testing  
Analytical Methods  
Quality Assurance  
Devices  
Security  
Packaging  
Pharmaceuticals  
Government Liaison

<https://www.astm.org/COMMITTEE/D37.htm>

### **Why ASTM?**

ASTM facilitates a fair and open process, where everyone has a say and will be cleansed of personal interest or dominance of authority through the ASTM procedures. Standards developed by the entire industry, instead of one group, company, individual, or association establishes a fair and even playing field and prevents large companies with huge financial or personal interests to dominate the process.

### **Technical Committees**

Technical Committees develop and maintain ASTM standards. They are grouped by designation according to related activities within a particular scope of work (ex: A01 on Steel, Stainless Steel, and Related Alloys). ASTM Committees are made up of over 32,000 volunteers from industry and include manufacturers and consumers, as well as other interest groups such as government or academia. Any interested individual can participate on a Technical Committee through ASTM membership.

<https://www.astm.org/COMMIT/newcommit.html>

### **List Of ASTM Technical Committees**

[https://www.astm.org/COMMIT/committees\\_full.html](https://www.astm.org/COMMIT/committees_full.html)

### **ASTM Technical Committee Officer Handbook**

[https://www.astm.org/TechCommitteeOfficer\\_Handbook.html#s077](https://www.astm.org/TechCommitteeOfficer_Handbook.html#s077)

**Tiny House Industry News: Tiny House Alliance USA**





### **Tiny Homes Terms Were Eliminated From ICC Standards**

Tiny homes were first excluded, then included and because the proposal was voted down by the code council, all terminology of tiny homes has been stricken.

**Reason:** This Committee proposal deletes all mention of tiny homes in the ICC 1200 & 1205 Standards.

Requirements for tiny homes are adopted by the AHJ, and should not be mandated by the Standards. AHJ may adopt IRC Appendix Q, but they may not. This will leave that decision up to them and not require it when the Standards are adopted.

<https://www.tinyhouseallianceusa.org/tiny-home-terms-eliminated-from-icc-standards/>

## Tiny Houses On Wheels, Barriers To Living Legally



## **A Global Dilemma: Is It A Building Or Is It A Vehicle?**

There are numerous associations that have formed across the globe representing the stakeholders to implement change in legislation and zoning to legalize tiny houses to become a viable solution to housing. There are think tanks, affordable housing summits, festivals and meeting after meeting occurring, all with the goal to create more legal places to live.

*At this time, there is not one unified industry standard that is recognized for tiny houses on wheels and each jurisdiction, bank, insurance agency, etc... could have a different definition and criteria to deny or allow them.*

<https://www.tinyhouseallianceusa.org/tiny-houses-on-wheels-barriers-to-living-legally/>



*Photo Courtesy Wind River Tiny Homes*

## **ASTME541 Approved To Be Revised For Reinstatement**

ASTME541 is a standard that has been used for almost four decades. In simplified terms, it is the personnel requirements for 3rd parties that inspect manufactured structures. The standard was withdrawn in 2019.

Janet Thome advocated for the reinstatement of ASTME541 in response to the growing concern that "big box" certification companies were swallowing up smaller 3rd party agencies, and closing the window for new 3rd party agencies to form new companies. They were also adding more and more requirements, which add more costs that ultimately end up adding to the costs to the 3rd parties, the manufacturers and to housing.

*This is a great win for small manufacturers and for affordable housing.*

<https://www.tinyhouseallianceusa.org/astme541-approved-to-be-revised-for-reinstatement/>

## **Become A Stakeholder And Have Your Voice Heard**

*Contact Janet Thome to be added to the ASTM Tiny House Standards stakeholder's list.*

*janet@tinyhouseallianceusa.org /509 345 2013*

*Janet-is also happy to set up a call if you would like to understand more about the ASTM opportunity.*

***Tiny House Alliance USA***  
*<https://www.tinyhouseallianceusa.org/>*

***The Future Of Tiny Is Now!***