



# LEE COUNTY BUILDING INSPECTIONS

CHIEF BUILDING OFFICIAL: Joel R. Hubbard

## Policy Memorandum

**Title:** Small Residential Dwelling (Tiny House) Foundation Policy

**Code Name:** Lee County International Residential Code (IRC)

**Code Sections:** R401.1 Application, R403.1.4 Minimum depth, R403.1.4.1 Frost protection

### Code Language:

**R401.1 Application.** The provisions of this chapter shall control the design and construction of the foundation and foundation spaces for buildings. In addition to the provisions of this chapter, the design and construction of foundations in flood hazard areas shall be in accordance with the Lee County Flood Damage Prevention Resolution. Wood foundations shall be designed in accordance with AWC PWF.

**R403.1.4 Minimum depth.** Exterior footings shall be placed not less than 12 inches below the undisturbed ground surface. Where applicable, the depth of footings shall also conform to Sections R403.1.4.1 through R403.1.4.2.

**R403.1.4.1 Frost protection.** Except where otherwise protected from frost, foundation walls, piers and other permanent supports of buildings and structures shall be protected from frost by one or more of the following methods:

1. Extended below the frost line specified in Table R301.2.(1).
2. Constructing in accordance with Section R403.3.
3. Constructing in accordance with ASCE 32.
4. Erected on solid rock.

Footings shall not bear on frozen soil unless the frozen condition is permanent.

### Exceptions:

1. Protection of freestanding non-dwelling accessory structures with an area of 400 square feet or less, of light-frame construction, with an eave height of 10 feet or less shall not be required.
2. Protection of freestanding non-dwelling accessory structures with an area of 400 square feet or less, of other than light-frame construction, with an eave height of 10 feet or less shall not be required.
3. Decks not supported by a dwelling and less than 30 inches in height need not be provided with footings that extend below the frost line.

**Scope of Policy:** To clarify acceptable foundation construction methods for small residential dwellings (tiny houses on foundation) meeting outlined criteria.

**Policy:** Small residential dwellings (tiny houses) consisting of light frame wood construction shall have a foundation meeting one of the following requirements:

1. Meet the prescriptive foundation requirements of the IRC.
  - Building area of 400 square feet or less, excluding loft areas
  - Continuous footing meeting sizes and requirements IRC Section R403
  - Foundation walls meeting sizes and requirements of IRC Section R404
  - The depth of the footing shall be at least 12 inches below undisturbed soil
2. Meet the prescriptive pier foundation requirements of the IRC where the following criteria is met:
  - Building area of 400 square feet or less
  - Light frame wood construction only
  - Continuous footing and anchorage requirements per IRC Section R404.1.5.3
  - Isolated masonry pier requirements per IRC Section R404.1.9
3. Any other foundation method and design from a structural engineer licensed in the State of Alabama that is acceptable to the Building Official. Submittal documentation shall include the following at a minimum:
  - Structural plans and details stamped and signed by the engineer
  - Structural calculations including design criteria stamped and signed by the engineer

**Intent:** To provide clarity on an acceptable foundation design or an engineered design for small residential dwellings (tiny houses) in accordance to the prescriptive requirements of the code.

*Policy item # 1 establishes that a small residential dwelling is required to have a continuous footing/foundation as outlined in the prescriptive requirements of the IRC. The foundation needs to be properly sized per the code and needs to extend 12 inches below undisturbed soil.*

Policy item #2 establishes a prescriptive foundation method for a pier foundation design for a small residential dwelling (tiny house). This method can be used only when the proposed small residential dwelling meets all of the criteria listed.

Policy item #3 establishes that any other foundation method or design from a structural engineer licensed in the State of Alabama may be considered and approved by the Building Official where deemed acceptable. The engineered design shall include plans with details and any supporting structural calculations, including design criteria, indicating adequacy in meeting the building code. All submittal documents shall include the engineer's wet stamp and signature.

*Joel Hubbard*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joel R. Hubbard  
Chief Building Official

08 | 01 | 2023  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Effective Date