

THE MOBILIZER

Fuel Tank Removal/Replacement Financial Assistance Program

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Resident Organizer

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Is your fuel tank getting old? Have you noticed rust or any leaks? When was the last time a professional inspected your fuel tank? Fuel tank upkeep is critical for your health, safety and environmental protection, and though fuel tanks are not always front of mind in the summer months, it is dangerous to be caught off guard by a fuel tank issue once the cold of winter sets in.

Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation has new rules to ensure the safety of above ground fuel tanks. If your tank does not meet the new standards your fuel dealer may have to 'red tag' your tank and be unable to refill it until the tank meets the new standards. If you need a new tank but are worried about how to afford it the good news is: there is grant money available (up to \$2000 per household) to offset or in many cases cover the full cost of fuel tank replacement. (*Note: Funds are NOT available to replace propane tanks.*)



How to Apply for Funding:

1. Fill out the Department of Environmental Conservation's grant application which can be found online at the link below or call the Mobile Home Program and we will happily mail you an application: http://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wmp/UST/2017.USTASTgrant.NL_.pdf
2. Provide proof of home ownership such as a property tax bill or deed
3. Provide proof of household income such as: Federal Income Tax filing (1040, EZ, or EZA), SSI statements or other Federal benefit forms; State tax returns will NOT be accepted as proof.
4. Submit completed application packages via mail to:
VT DEC, Waste Management & Prevention Division
1 National Life Dr, Davis 1
Montpelier, VT 05602-3704
Or submit completed application package via e-mail to:
Kristin Davis (802-522-0071) – Kristin.davis@vermont.gov

What to expect once you've applied:

1. The Department of Environmental Conservation will be in touch with you in about 2 weeks of receiving your application to let you know whether you've been awarded grant money or not.
2. If eligible you can receive up to \$2000 in grant money. The amount of money you will receive is based on household income, number of people in the household and how seriously damaged your fuel tank is.
3. If awarded grant money you may be required to seek a minimum of three competitive quotes for the job. Be sure to consult your fuel dealer, look in the yellow pages for heating and plumbing contractors in your area, contact your Community Action Agency for referrals or call into the Mobile Home Program for help/suggestions with this process.

Be Smart! Be Prepared!

Do you have an **EMERGENCY** Plan?

Interested in FREE Emergency Planning Workshops?

CVOEO's *Mobile Home Program* and faculty of UVM's *Dept. of Community Development & Applied Economics* are offering

FREE Emergency Preparedness Trainings to mobile home communities!

We come to you! We schedule at your convenience. There is **no cost!**

But there will be **FUN** and **SNACKS!**



Call Laura to learn more:

(802) 660 - 3455 ex. 108

Emergency Planning Workshop Participant Feedback:

"The process was very organized and informative."

"A plan in place is key to safety and security."

"I was impressed with all the information you had regarding our area."

Congratulations Continue!

Starting 2016 strong, the Mobile Home Program would like to extend our congratulations the newest formed resident purchased mobile home park: Triangle Court MHP, Brandon. Residents have purchased the park land and now control their own destiny of how their parks are managed. They join eight previously formed resident owned communities: **ANDCO MHP**, Highgate; **Bunker Hill Community Co-op**, Windsor; **Homestead Acres MH Cooperative**, Swanton; **Milton MH Cooperative**, Milton; **North Avenue Co-op**, Burlington (formerly Farrington's MHP); **Williston Woods Co-op Housing**, Williston; **Shelburnewood MHP**, Shelburne; and **Tri-Park Cooperative**, Brattleboro.

We at the Mobile Home Program feel very strongly promoting cooperatively owned mobile home parks and each time a privately held park is put up for sale we will work with interested residents to see if the cooperative model is viable.

Upcoming Cooperative Trainings: We are currently looking for new ways to support our mobile home park cooperatives through our annual training series and other opportunities to come visit and build stronger relationships within the community.

If your cooperative is interested, call us at: (802) 922-5276 x204

A Note from the Director

We have been very busy this summer training our new Resident Organizer, working with three parks, which have been put up for sale, by supporting residents as they consider buying their park, and dealing with several lot rent increases above the mediation threshold of CPI+1% (which for 2016 was 3%). Several parks had increases above this year's threshold but few chose to organize a petition to challenge the significant increase in lot rent. However, one park, experiencing a back-to-back annual increase over 9% decided this year they would push back. A single resident contacted our office to find out what options and rights residents had. From that call a petition was circulated and signed by a majority of residents in the park and sent to the state within 15 days of the rent increase notification.

Thanks to the hard work of a couple of concerned residents with the support of the Mobile Home Program, the residents were able to bring the park ownership to mediation and win. While successfully lowering the lot rent increase is not a guarantee, in this case the residents and ownership were able to come to an agreement to lower it. The original lot rent increase of \$27.00 was brought down to \$17.00. The increase was still significant, but saved residents \$120.00/year each compared to what they would have paid if they done nothing. This parks experience highlights the importance of asking questions and working with neighbors to improve the quality of life in your park. If you have questions about lot rents, park sale or closure, inadequate conditions in your park, or questions related to your home upkeep and wellbeing, please contact us. We may not have every answer every time, but we work hard to answer the questions we can and refer you to other organizations to get the answers that we don't have.

— Jonathan Bond

Updates to Mobile Home Park Rules

Newly amended Housing Division Rules went into effect on July 1, 2016 implementing legislation that expanded the Department's enforcement authority under 10 V.S.A. chapter 153, the mobile home park act, to include administrative penalties for violations of the act by park owners. The amended rules establish the process for a notice of alleged violation, assessment of penalties, and provide the park owner an opportunity for a hearing on the alleged violation.

Penalties of up to \$5,000 for each violation will be based on factors including the degree of actual and potential impact on public health, safety, and welfare resulting from the violation; the number of people affected; whether or not the violation was corrected after the park owner was notified; any economic benefit gained by the violation; the deterrent effect of the penalty; and whether the park owner has been fined for the same or similar violations before.

To read the updated rules in their entirety visit: http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/housing/rules. See Housing Division Rules, Part 1: Mobile Home Parks, Section 14: Penalties; Enforcement to read section referenced above.

Act 8 of 2015 also clarified the duties of mobile home park owners and residents with respect to the warranty of habitability and road maintenance; created a mechanism to obtain a court order to authorize the removal of a mobile home from a park after eviction; and clarified when a mobile home may be considered abandoned after an eviction. Full text of act here: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Documents/2016/Docs/ACTS/ACT008/ACT008%20As%20Enacted.pdf>



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Mobile Home Program

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Please join the State of VT Department of Housing and Community Development in supporting the MHP and making this newsletter possible. Offer your support! **Donate now at www.cvoeo.org.**

What Can The Mobile Home Program Do For You?

The Mission

To give mobile home park residents greater control over their housing, through organizing and education, in order to protect and improve their housing rights and living conditions.

Who we are

The Mobile Home Program is a program of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity. We work with mobile home residents throughout the state of Vermont to defend their interests and ensure they are able to maintain their housing. We recognize that mobile homes are an important kind of affordable housing for many Vermonters and our goal is to keep mobile homes safe and affordable for Vermonters.

Housing Counseling

Providing information about:

- ◆ Resident and park owner rights and responsibilities
- ◆ How to resolve health and safety concerns related to water, sewer, electricity, road conditions and how to contact the proper enforcement agencies

Counsel individuals:

- ◆ To better understand the terms and conditions of their leases or loans
- ◆ To steer them away from predatory loans
- ◆ Who are facing eviction or foreclosure

Referral Services

Providing referrals to:

- ◆ Financial institutions for mortgages, refinancing, and home repair loans
- ◆ Agencies specializing in credit and debt counseling
- ◆ Lawyers and Superior Courts for illegal evictions, denied entry into parks, landlord-tenant disputes, or small claims
- ◆ Community action agencies for assistance with back-lot-rent, utility payment assistance, and weatherization services
- ◆ Fair Housing for cases of housing discrimination
- ◆ Efficiency Vermont for rebates and technical assistance

Resident Organizing

Assisting residents:

- ◆ Facing lot rent increases and provide guidance to residents who wish to seek mediation to dispute rent increases
- ◆ Facing park sales or closures

Advocacy

- ◆ We promote the interests of mobile home residents by participating in the legislative and policy making processes in Vermont as mobile home park experts, and
- ◆ Assist mobile home park residents in exercising their rights provided under Vermont state law. We do this by working directly with residents and in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental agencies.