



Modular Construction - Our Top 10 Questions Answered

Commercial projects are using modular construction to improve schedule control, strengthen coordination, and reduce disruption on active sites. The shift moves several steps earlier in the process, with code review, inspection, testing, certification, and documentation often beginning before installation and continuing through manufacturing. Early coordination becomes especially important when modular manufacturers must meet state program requirements before they can begin to manufacture the units.

Approval requirements differ by jurisdiction. Most state programs use third-party review; others involve state or local agencies, or a combination of both. Certification labels or state insignias may also be required before modules are accepted on site.

Projects are more likely to stay on track when these requirements are addressed during design and fabrication, rather than after modules arrive.

This article is part of **Intertek's** 10-Question Series, which covers common questions from building and construction teams. This one focuses on modular construction.

“In modular construction, approval, inspection, and documentation often begin before installation.”

Top 10 Common Questions and Answers About Modular Construction

1. Do modular buildings need to meet building codes in North America?

Yes. Modular buildings must meet the same core code requirements as site-built construction. Depending on the project, those may include structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire safety, accessibility, energy, and life safety requirements.

2. Which codes and standards apply to modular construction?

Requirements depend on the building type, occupancy, and jurisdiction. In Canada, CSA A277 is commonly used



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for prefabricated buildings, modules, and panels. In the United States, manufacturers must meet adopted codes and any state-specific modular requirements.

3. When should modular plan review and inspection begin?

Plan review and inspection should begin during design development, before fabrication starts. It is critical for your team to know how far in advance of planned production some states can take to complete your registration and approval process – this must be completed before your plans can be approved and submitted, and before production can start. Changes made later can affect production, shipping, and installation.

4. What is the role of a third-party inspection agency?

A third-party agency reviews plans, performs in-plant inspections, and verifies that modules are built in accordance with approved documents and applicable requirements. That role matters because much of the work takes place off-site.

5. How are modular buildings approved across different jurisdictions?

Approval requirements differ by state and local authority. Some projects use third-party review, some require state or local review, and some require both. Teams should confirm the approval process early.

6. How are structural loads addressed in modular construction?

Structural design must account for service loads as well as temporary loads from lifting, transport, staging, and installation. Connection details, bearing conditions, and module alignment all need to be considered.

7. What types of testing apply to modular construction?

Testing depends on the building system and the approval process. It may include MEP, structural performance, fire resistance, acoustics, air and water performance, durability, and system-level evaluations.

8. How does transportation affect modular units?

Transportation places added stress on modules through lifting, movement, vibration, and handling. These conditions should be considered during design to help avoid damage and maintain compliance when the modules arrive.

9. What documentation is required for modular approval?

Documentation often includes construction drawings, material specifications, installation details, inspection records, and certification documents. Labels or insignias may also be required by the authority having jurisdiction.

10. How does Intertek support modular construction projects?

Intertek supports modular manufacturers through consultative support, navigating state program registrations, initial factory approval, and the institution of state-mandated quality assurance programs. In addition, we support your projects through plan review, in-plant inspection, testing, certification, labeling, and compliance services. These services help teams address approval requirements from design through delivery.

Modular construction changes when compliance work happens. When review, inspection, testing, and documentation are built into the process early, teams are better positioned to avoid delays during delivery and installation.

Click here to learn how Intertek supports modular construction projects through plan review, in-plant inspection, testing, certification, and compliance services.

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