



Temporary or Permanent Building? What you need to know about Modular buildings

Calling a building “temporary” to meet building codes typically implies a strategy to bypass stricter, costlier, and more time-consuming requirements governing permanent structures. While this approach can accelerate project timelines and reduce upfront costs, it introduces significant legal, safety, and operational limitations, most notably a strict time limit (usually 180 days) and reduced structural load requirements.

Key Implications

- » **Strict Temporal Limits (180-Day Rule):** As defined in the International Building Code (IBC) and International Fire Code (IFC), temporary structures are typically permitted for a maximum of 180 days. While extensions can be requested, classifying a building this way implies it must be removed or approved as permanent after this period.
- » **Regulatory Scrutiny and Risk of Removal:** The building official is authorized to order the demolition or removal of a temporary structure at any time.
- » **Risk of Fines:** Misclassifying a permanent structure to evade compliance can lead to enforcement actions, including fines or, in cases of violating a temporary stop notice, unlimited fines.
- » **Ethical and Public Trust Concerns:** Misclassifying a permanent building as temporary can be viewed as an attempt to evade public scrutiny and land-use policies, which can undermine trust and trigger legal challenges.

In short, most of the modular buildings we encounter as labs are not temporary buildings. We recommend that care be taken in classifying these structures to avoid the consequences outlined above.