

**Ask Jon Eakes**

# Skirts on Mobile Homes & Frost Heaving

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Bruce from Thunder Bay writes:

I own a mobile home that is 12' x 64' and I have to replace the skirting around the base and which product is best to use. You always talk about regular homes but not mobile homes and we need help too. In the area that I live in there is a very high water table and as winter comes, the ground starts to freeze it lifts everything and anything including mobile homes or buckling the skirting or breaking it while it is still attached to the base of the mobile home. With the ground rising as much as 6" or 7". Then in spring it starts to go down again causing everything it has buckled to try and go back into it's original position.

----- Response:

You are right, we do very little on mobile homes, but it takes specific questions and problems like yours to get us moving. I must admit no special expertise on mobile homes, but I can completely understand your soil heaving problem. Doesn't the house go up too? 6 to 7 inches!!!

My experience in housing has been: either find the cause of movement and stop it -- or find a way to go with it. I believe you are forced into the latter camp. How to allow a skirt to move 7 inches without damage.

I am just brainstorming (for lack of field experience) so you will have to judge if I am out in left field or not -- so before I put in my two-bits, let me give you an experienced answer sent in by Brian from Wisconsin:

Hi Jon, A solution I have used multiple times with major success is to attach the skirting to a frame anchored in the ground and give it room to slide on top in a 4.5-inch j-channel. If you leave the skirting in the middle of the channel, this allows 2.25 inches of play either way. Using this method, I have never had a frost here in Central Wisconsin that has forced the skirting out of the channel or caused buckling. If someone is getting an 8-inch frost heave they either have standing water underneath or saturated ground. -- Thanks Brian

Back to my guessing that inspired Brian's response. How about an accordion type of skirt with a heavy bottom. This could be something like an accordion closet door turned sidewise. The heavy bottom would be to keep the bottom on the ground as it moved up and down. The problem is outdoor durability of a thin vinyl door. Perhaps even more interesting are the European style metal or vinyl shutters that roll up into the top. The roll could be hidden under the house. That would give you a metal skirt that would really keep animals out but would slide up and down with the seasonal movement. A third possibility, and perhaps the most practical, would be an overlapping inner and outer skirt, the outer one attached to the house and the inner one dug into the ground with room for them to slide over each other. Rain would flow away while the lower skirt could shift up and down behind the outer skirt.

In all of these cases you would have to work out some special corner or transition joints. That could actually be done with a 4x4 post hanging from the mobile home stopping a good foot short of the ground, and then a 4x4 hollow (metal or vinyl) tube sliding over that stuck into the ground. Then the accordion or rolling blind or slipping panel could butt into this corner with perhaps a "U" channel attached to the floating hollow piece to keep it in place.

Let me know if you find something that actually works, or if someone else out there has a better solution.

**Keywords:**

Crawl Space, Mobile Homes, Frost Heaving, Environmental

