



POLICY FOR SOILS & GEOLOGY REPORT REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this guide is to clarify whether a soils and/or geology report is required or exempted when obtaining a building permit. Exemption from the foundation and soils investigation requirements shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be performed in any manner in violation of the requirements set forth in the California Building Code (CBC), the California Residential Code (CRC), or the California Health and Safety Code.

Each project is unique, and additional requirements may be enforced as deemed appropriate by the Building Official.

A. The following projects require a soils and/or geology report:

1. All new residential (single-family dwellings, duplexes, townhouses and multifamily dwellings);
2. New detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) with a footprint exceeding 1,000 s.f. (unless site is field verified and found suitable by the architect or engineer of record with a written report);
3. All commercial and multifamily dwellings (new and additions);
4. Basements (residential and commercial);
5. Any deep foundations (residential and commercial);
6. Push Piers, except for foundation upgrade for single-family dwellings;
7. Hillsides that have a slope of 15% or steeper (residential and commercial).

B. The following projects do not require a soils and/or geology report:

1. A site-specific study may be exempted for buildings that are classified in Risk Category I per CBC Table 1604.5 (i.e. agricultural facilities, temporary facilities, minor storage facilities);
2. A site-specific study may be exempted for projects meeting all the following criteria:
 - a. Additions or alterations to single family or duplex residential buildings classified as R-3 occupancy where building are no more than two stories in height and have no basement;
 - b. Building and foundation not on a hillside with a slope 15% or more;
 - c. Property is not located in an area with questionable soil characteristics as determined by quantifiable data created by accepted soil science methodologies or as determined by the building official.

C. When a site-specific foundation and soils investigation is exempted, the building and foundation systems shall comply with the following general guidelines (CBC and CRC):

1. The maximum allowable foundation pressure shall not exceed 1,500 psf;
2. The minimum depth of footings shall be 18 inches below the undisturbed ground surface. The new foundation type shall be compatible with the existing foundations;
3. The maximum allowable lateral bearing pressure shall not exceed 100 psf/ft;
4. Allowable sliding resistance = 130 psf x footing soil contact area;
5. Allowable Frictional Resistance for Piers = 250 psf;
6. Specified compressive strength of concrete shall not be less than 2,500 psi.

Please note that where the soil classification, strength or compressibility, load-bearing value superior than specified in the building code and/or ground-water table elevation is in doubt, a soils report may be required.