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When is a Soils Investigation Required?

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this technical bulletin is to clarify when a soils investigation is required as part of a building permit application. The requirements below are intended as general policy guidelines. The Building Official may require a soils investigation for any project. Where a soils investigation is required, it shall conform to the requirements of Chapter 18 of the California Building Code.

GENERAL

In all cases, if a soils report has been previously performed for the parcel, this report must be included in the application. If the existing report is more than two years old, a soils report review letter from a qualified licensed professional must be included with the application. The recommendations of the report and review letter must be followed.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

A soils investigation is required as follows:

1. New or replacement other than Occupancy Group R-3 or U (Groups A, B, E, F, H, I, M, R-1, R-2 and S Occupancies) - soils investigation **REQUIRED**
 - a. Trash enclosures, storage buildings, and other accessory structures to such buildings which are not occupied by human beings **NOT REQUIRED**
2. New or replacement single family dwelling, second unit, or guest house – soils investigation **REQUIRED** when any of the following conditions exist, as determined by site review or mapped information:
 - a. Area of suspected slides, slumps, or soil creep
 - b. Area of previous fill placement
 - c. Area of suspected expansive soil
 - d. Area without sufficient slope setback
 - e. Area subject to possible liquefaction
 - f. Area of suspected soft, compressible, or organic soil with low bearing capacity
 - g. Area without recommended setback from stream
 - h. Area of high moisture content in soil
 - i. Area subject to high erosion
 - j. Area of soft soil due to past deep ripping or cultivation below minimum foundation depth
 - k. Area within 1000 feet of a solid waste disposal site
 - l. There is evidence of structural failure of the existing foundation due to soil conditions
 - m. When the structure is not light frame wood construction.

3. New or replacement garage, storage building, workshop, pool house, studio, barn or other structure in which occupants do not live. - soils investigation **REQUIRED** if:
 - a. Area without sufficient slope setback
 - b. Area without recommended setback from stream
 - c. Proposed building is potentially hazardous to other structures
 - d. There is evidence of structural failure of the existing foundation due to soil conditions
4. Remodels with no increase in square footage and no foundation repair or upgrade - soils investigation **NOT REQUIRED**
5. Room additions - soils investigation **NOT REQUIRED** if:
 - a. The proposed foundation is the same type as the existing foundation and,
 - b. The existing foundation is a perimeter or pier and grade beam foundation and,
 - c. The existing foundation complied with the code when it was constructed, if a building code was adopted at that time, and
 - d. The addition has sufficient slope and stream setback, and
 - e. There is no evidence of structural failure of the existing foundation due to soil conditions and
 - f. The proposed foundation complies with current code, and
 - g. If the proposed foundation is a pier and grade beam foundation, the piers must be the same depth as the existing piers
6. Room additions - soils investigation **REQUIRED** if:
 - a. The proposed work does not comply with Number 5 above and,
 - b. Any of the conditions described in number 3 above exist
7. Foundation upgrades - soils investigation **REQUIRED** if:
 - a. There is evidence of structural failure of the existing foundation due to soil conditions
 - b. Area without sufficient slope or stream setback
8. Elevations to raise structure above the base flood elevation – soils investigation **NOT REQUIRED.**
9. Swimming pools- Soils investigation **NOT REQUIRED**
 - a. If expansive soil is assumed in the pool design and
 - b. If soils investigation is not required by the product listing
10. Change of occupancy- soils investigation **NOT REQUIRED** if:
 - a. The foundation complied with the code when it was constructed, and
 - b. There is no evidence of structural failure of the existing foundation due to soil conditions