

Guidelines for When a Geotechnical (Soils) Report is Required

2019 California Building Code (CBC) 2019 California Residential Code (CRC)*

The following types of projects are provided to help the applicant determine whether their project will require submittal of a Soils (or Geotechnical) Report. Soils Reports are typically not required for non-habitable structures. Please note that the Planning Department reserves the right to require soils reports for projects that are not listed below. The County Geologist or a Registered Civil Engineer on the Planning Department staff will make the final determination.

1. New single-family, multi-family or habitable accessory buildings
2. Commercial buildings, industrial buildings or critical facilities
3. Non-habitable buildings which consist of two or more stories
4. Additions to any of the above which is located on slopes greater than 20%, located on fill, located in an area of potential liquefaction, or located in a flood plain, floodway or coastal high hazard zone
5. Additions to single-family, multi-family habitable accessory buildings greater than 500 square feet
6. Additions to a commercial buildings, industrial buildings or critical facilities greater than 250 square feet
7. Modification, reconstruction or replacement of 65 percent of the major structural components—consisting of the foundation, floor framing, exterior wall framing, and roof framing—of an existing habitable structure within any consecutive five-year period, or modification, reconstruction or replacement of 50 percent of the major structural components of an existing critical structure or facility, as defined by this chapter, within any consecutive five-year period, whether the work is done at one time or as the sum of multiple projects.
8. The addition of habitable space to any building, where the addition increases the habitable space by more than fifty (50) percent over the existing habitable space, measured in square feet, whether the additions are constructed at one time or as the sum of multiple additions during the life of the building.
9. Additions of any size to a building that is located on a coastal bluff, dune, or in the coastal hazard area, that extends the existing building in a seaward direction.
10. Installation of a new foundation for a habitable building.
11. The repair, replacement, or upgrade of an existing foundation of a habitable building that affects more than fifty (50) percent of the foundation (measured in linear feet for perimeter foundations, square feet for slab foundations, or fifty (50) percent of the total number of piers), or an addition to an existing foundation that adds more than fifty (50) percent of the original foundation area, whether the work is performed at one time or as the sum of multiple projects during the life of the building.
12. Any change of use from non-habitable to habitable use, according to the definition of “habitable” found in Section 16.10.040 of the Santa Cruz County Code, or a change of use from any non-critical facility to a critical facility
13. Any alteration of any building posted “Unsafe to Occupy” due to geologic hazards
14. Retaining walls greater than 4 feet in height, which require a building permit, retaining walls that function as a part of a landslide repair whether or not a building permit is required, sea walls, and gravity walls
15. Bridges
16. Water tanks greater than 10,000 gallons
17. Above ground commercial storage facilities for hazardous or flammable material
18. Proposed building sites or access roadways located on property having undocumented or un-permitted grading (such as log landings, logging roads or prior unauthorized grading)
19. Grading with cuts or fills over three feet in height located within five feet (horizontally) of a property line, or grading that has the potential to cause instability or other grading related impacts to adjacent property
20. Access driveways or roadways that include fill greater than 2’
21. Grading on slopes greater than 20%
22. Creation of cut or fill slopes five feet or greater in height related to slope stabilization, landslide repairs, or streambank protection
23. Grading activities where there is evidence of high groundwater or spring activity
24. Any portion of development located within a FEMA floodplain or floodway
25. Coastal protection structures
26. Land Divisions
27. Any other project deemed by civil engineering staff or the County Geologist that a geotechnical report is required to ensure the integrity of the proposed work.
28. Any project or structure required by the California Building Code to have a geotechnical report.

* Waivers to the requirements for a soils report may be allowed for projects under the 2019 CRC in accordance with CRC Section 401.4 (as amended by the County of Santa Cruz Code 12.10.220(G)(1))