

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT POLICY/ORDINANCE  
INTERPRETATION**

Interpretation No.: WCF-04 (Wireless Communication Facilities, “Picocells”, revised)

Effective Date: 9/14/09

Originally Issued: 11/07/09: This interpretation supercedes and replaces WCF-03

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**Question:**

*Do very small commercial wireless telecommunication facilities (WCFs) known as “picocells” qualify as an exemption from the WCF Ordinance under 13.10.660(e)(10) – the Wi-Fi hotspot exemption?*

**Applicable Ordinance Section**

13.10.660(e): Exemptions (from the WCF Ordinance)

**INTERPRETATION:**

Picocell WCFs that are intended to serve only users on or within the subject parcel upon which the picocell is installed are exempt from the WCF Ordinance. Picocell WCFs that are intended to serve users outside the subject parcel upon which the picocell is installed are not exempt from the WCF Ordinance. Applications for such off-site user picocells are to be considered in the same way as other cell towers, subject to the same regulations as larger-type cell towers. Like other WCFs, such picocells are not permitted on R-1 zoned parcels except under very limited circumstances (as explained in County Code subsection 13.10.661[b][4]). Like applications for other WCFs, commercial use picocells are subject to a Level 5 Commercial Development Permit. They may also require a building or electrical permit if new structures or electrical hookups are needed.

**Reason:**

“Picocells” are a type of cellular telecommunication base station, or WCF, that cover small areas from 100-2,500 ft. away from the device. They are approximately 1’x1’x 4” in size, or smaller. They are intended mainly for indoor use (i.e., in a single house or business), but can be mounted outdoors as well to cover small areas. However, picocell WCFs intended to serve off-site users, despite their small size and low level of visual impact, are considered to be commercial uses, and therefore are considered to be a use that is incompatible with higher density (R-1) residential uses.

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