Flood Elevation Policy

PURPOSE

Chapter 7B of the Sonoma County Code contains regulations for the required elevation of structures to at least one foot above the base flood level when property in the flood zone is repaired or improved. The purpose of this policy is to provide applicants and staff with a clear and concise summary of these requirements.

DEFINITION TABLE* At the same time - means when two permits are in an active issued status at the same time
* Conversion— means an increase in habitable space square footage to a residential dwelling or commercial structure and/or ancillary structure(s) via the conversion of non-habitable space to habitable space
* Damage Repair - means the repair of damage from a single flood related event
* Flood - means a general and temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of normally dry land areas from unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any source
* Habitable Space – means habitable or occupiable space as defined in the California Building Code (CBC) and for the purposes of this policy includes bathrooms, kitchens, closets, utility rooms, hallways and any other area in the building that is designed for human use.
* Improvement - means any reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, or other improvement of a structure, but does not include conversion

GENERAL

Structures are sometimes repaired after being damaged and sometimes voluntarily improved by their owners. Chapter 7B of the Sonoma County Code establishes “triggers" for residential and commercial property, based on the percentage of repair or improvement, when elevation of a structure is required. Policies have also been developed for establishing both the value of the existing structure and the value of the proposed work, in order to compute these percentages.

Both new construction as defined in Chapter 7B of the Sonoma County Code and conversions as defined in this policy require elevation.

AUTHORITY

Chapter 7B of the Sonoma County Code

PROCEDURES

A. The table below shows when elevation of a structure is required for existing structures in the flood zone which are either repaired or improved.
### Elevation is Required when

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Residential Structures</th>
<th>Non-Residential Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAMAGE REPAIR</strong> percentage is:</td>
<td>50% or more for any single flood event</td>
<td>50% or more for any single flood event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IMPROVEMENT</strong> percentage is:</td>
<td>40% or more in any consecutive 3-year period</td>
<td>50% or more in any consecutive 3-year period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of <strong>DAMAGE REPAIR</strong> and <strong>IMPROVEMENT</strong> percentage is:</td>
<td>50% Damage repair is not cumulative, improvement is cumulative</td>
<td>50% Damage repair is not cumulative, improvement is cumulative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The percentages in the table are calculated by dividing the value of the work, as established in item 2 below, by the market value of the structure, as established in item 3 below.

2. The value of the work is established as follows:
   a. For improvement permits that add square footage (room additions), the value of the work is the cost per square foot found in the PRMD fee schedule multiplied by the room addition area in square feet.
   b. For improvement and damage repair permits with no additional square footage, plans and a construction cost estimate must be submitted with each application. (Exception: see item c below for permits not requiring plans.) To insure fairness and uniformity, the estimate must be in a standard line item estimating format, showing material, labor, profit, and overhead for each item. The material and labor costs listed must be consistent with typical construction costs in Sonoma County.
   c. For permits which do not require plans (A-BLD permits) the contractor's cost is used to establish the value of the work. This cost must be consistent with typical construction costs in Sonoma County.
   d. For the purpose of this calculation, cost of the work shall not include work to correct substandard housing conditions identified by code enforcement, alterations to historic structures, and work to meet federally mandated requirements (such as work to make a structure accessible for persons with disabilities).

3. The market value of the structure is any of the following, at the applicant's option:
   a. The assessed value of the structure, excluding the land, as established by the Sonoma County Assessor, or
   b. The current market value of the structure, excluding the land, as established by an Appraiser licensed by the State of California to appraise the type of structure where the work is proposed.
      i. Appraisals must be made within 2 years of the date of the application.
      ii. Appraisals for the purpose of refinance or sale made by a licensed appraiser within this time frame may be used. Such appraisals must show the value of the
property, the value of the land, and the value of any other structures. The value of
the structure shall be established by subtracting the value of the land and the value
of any other structures from the market value of the property.

iii. An appraisal for the purpose of this calculation may be done within this time
frame by an Appraiser licensed by the State of California to appraise the type of
structure where the work is proposed. This appraisal must show the value of the
structure, excluding the land and other structures.

B. Elevation Calculation
1. The percentage of improvement is cumulative for the previous consecutive three year
period.
2. The percentage of damage repair is not cumulative, but established separately for each
flood related event.
3. All calculations are based on the issue date of the permit under consideration.
4. Determination of the elevation requirement for improvement is performed as follows:
   a. STEP 1- When a permit is issued for improvement, a percentage is assigned to the
      building permit. If the percentage exceeds the value in the table for the type of work,
      the structure must be elevated.
   b. STEP 2- The percentages previously established for any building permits for
      improvement with issue dates in the previous consecutive three year period are added
      to the percentage for the permit being reviewed. If the total of these percentages
      exceeds the value in the table for the type of work, the structure must be elevated.
   c. Additional habitable square footage added to a structure and conversions are
      considered new construction. All new construction in the flood zone must be
      elevated, regardless of value.
5. Determination of the elevation requirement for damage repair is performed as follows:
   a. STEP 1- When a permit is issued for damage repair, a percentage is assigned to the
      building permit, and compared to the percentages in the table. If the percentage
      exceeds the value in the table for the type of work, the structure must be elevated.
      I. The percentages previously established for any building permits for damage
      repair with issue dates in the previous consecutive three year period are NOT
      added to the percentage for the permit being reviewed.
6. Determination of the elevation requirement when damage repair and improvement are
done at the same time is performed as follows:
   a. Two permits are issued.
   b. STEP 1- Determination of the percentage of improvement is performed as in item 4
      above, taking into account only the current percentage. If the percentages in the table
      are exceeded for the type of work, the structure must be elevated.
   d. STEP 2- Determination of the percentage of damage repair is performed as in item 5
      above, and added to the percentage of improvement. If the percentages in the table are
      exceeded for the type of work, the structure must be elevated.
   e. STEP 3- Finally, determination of the percentage of improvement is performed as in
      item 4 above, taking into account only the current percentage, and added to the
      percentages previously established for any building permits for improvement, with
      issue dates in the previous consecutive three year period. No damage repair permits
are included in this calculation. If the percentages in the table are exceeded for the type of work, the structure must be elevated.

7. When a structure under construction with a permit is damaged in a flood, no percentage is calculated as long as the finished structure conforms to the approved plans.

8. Once the value of the structure is established, and a permit for work is issued based upon that value, the values and percentage associated with that permit cannot be changed.

9. Appeals of staff determinations of this administrative policy are made to the Director of the Permit and Resource Management Department or his/her. This decision shall be final.

Approved by:

/s/ Pete Parkinson
Pete Parkinson, Director

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