



## WHEN IS A SOILS INVESTIGATION REQUIRED?

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### 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**
  - Trash enclosures, storage buildings, and other accessory structures to such building 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:
  - Area of suspected slides, slumps, or soil creep
  - Area of previous fill placement
  - Area of suspected expansive soil
  - Area without sufficient slope setback
  - Area subject to possible liquefaction
  - Area of suspected soft, compressible, or organic soil with low bearing capacity
  - Area without recommended setback from stream
  - Area of high moisture content in soil
  - Area subject to high erosion
  - Area of soft soil due to past deep ripping or cultivation below minimum foundation depth
  - Area within 1000 feet of a solid waste disposal site
  - There is evidence of structural failure of the existing foundation due to soil conditions
  - When the structure is not light wood frame construction

**(OVER)**

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:
  - Area without sufficient slope setback
  - Area without recommended setback from stream
  - Proposed building is potentially hazardous to other structures
  - 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:
  - The proposed foundation is the same type as the existing foundation and,
  - The existing foundation is a perimeter or pier and grade beam foundation and,
  - The existing foundation complied with the code when it was constructed, if a building code was adopted at that time, and
  - The addition has sufficient slope and stream setback, and
  - There is no evidence of structural failure of the existing foundation due to soil conditions, and
  - The proposed foundation complies with current code, and
  - 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:
  - The proposed work does not comply with Number 5 above or,
  - Any of the conditions described in Number 3 exist
7. Foundation upgrades—soils investigation **REQUIRED** if:
  - There is evidence of structural failure of the existing foundation due to soil conditions
  - The area is without sufficient slope or stream setbacks
8. Elevations to raise structure above the base flood elevations—soils investigation **NOT REQUIRED**
9. Swimming pools—soils investigation **NOT REQUIRED** if
  - Expansive soil is assumed in the pool design and
  - Soils investigation is not required by the product listing
10. Change of occupancy—soils investigation **NOT REQUIRED** if
  - The foundation complied with the code when it was constructed, and
  - There is no evidence of structural failure of the existing foundation due to soil conditions