

## *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.

<b>Elevation is Required when</b>	<b>Residential Structures</b>	<b>Non-Residential Structures</b>
DAMAGE REPAIR percentage is:	50% or more for any single flood event	50% or more for any single flood event
IMPROVEMENT percentage is:	40% or more in any consecutive 3-year period	50% or more in any consecutive 3-year period
Combination of DAMAGE REPAIR and IMPROVEMENT percentage is:	50% Damage repair is not cumulative, improvement is cumulative <b>See item B-6 below</b>	50% Damage repair is not cumulative, improvement is cumulative <b>See item B-6 below</b>

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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