



## **FAQ: EXCEPTIONS REGARDING REQUIRED GEOLOGIC EVALUATION AND BUILDING PERMIT ISSUANCE FOR CZU FIRE REBUILDING**

### **What exceptions to requirements and timing of geologic information will be considered ?**

If a Pre-Application Geologic Hazard Clearance for your property resulted in a requirement for a site specific geologic report, you may apply for an exception to receive a building permit without first completing the report.

Exceptions are based on the property owner signing a legal document or “Covenant”, assuming risks, indemnifying the County, and agreeing to evacuate if an evacuation order is issued, which is recorded on the property title. Exceptions defer a geologic evaluation through final inspection so that owners can start building. The exception does not fully waive the requirement for a geologic evaluation.

### **What are the criteria for applying for an exception?**

- A pre-application geologic clearance or Geologic Hazard Assessment has been completed with the result that a site specific geologic investigation is required;
- Property owners have documented hardship by filling out the hardship questionnaire at [https://www.santacruzcounty.us/Portals/0/County/FireRecovery/pdfs/RPC/CZU\\_HARDSHIP\\_QUESTIONNAIRE\\_SCCC\\_16\\_10.pdf](https://www.santacruzcounty.us/Portals/0/County/FireRecovery/pdfs/RPC/CZU_HARDSHIP_QUESTIONNAIRE_SCCC_16_10.pdf);
- Rebuilding location is “in kind”, unless you are relocating to a site that geology staff have recommended because of lower geologic hazard;
- Property was owned by the exception applicant at the time of the fire;
- Owners meet any conditions of the exception, including recording legal documents on title and agreeing to comply with evacuation orders.

### **Is the County encouraging property owners to choose an exception?**

If your site was identified as one that should have geologic investigation, the hazard of debris flow landsliding and the associated property and life safety risks have not been fully characterized, and appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures will not/may not have been incorporated into project siting and design. Common mitigation measures to lower risk include: locating the building in the safest area relative to topography and other factors, and incorporating site-specific foundation and building design recommendations into the project plans. These opportunities are lost when building occurs before there is full information.

Further, an engineering study of debris flow-flooding risk in the burn area is currently underway, funded by the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County (CFSCC). The study is being done by a professional consulting firm with specific expertise evaluating debris flow risk after wildfire. That report is due in mid-September 2021, and it is prudent to wait to complete plans and/or to start building until the results of that study are available.

### **If I opt for an exception, why do I still need a geologic evaluation after I receive my building permit?**

The evaluation will characterize the potential debris flow landslide or other geologic hazards at the site and may recommend mitigation measures to lessen the risks to the home and occupants. Some

mitigation measures can be constructed separate from the building, such as debris flow deflection walls and berms.

The evaluation will also provide the property owner a greater understanding of the risks, and transparency to future property owners.

**Are there any conditions of the exception?**

Yes. Applicants must record a Covenant on title to the property, including an assumption of risk, indemnification, and agreement to evacuate if there is an evacuation order. It is recommended that property owners consult with legal, financial and real property experts to determine the possible effect of these documents on title, on the property.

**How Does Receiving an Exception Relate to the Requirement for a Geotechnical Report?**

You should consult your geotechnical engineer about whether and how the lack of pre-permit geologic information will affect their work and their ability to produce a report and subsequent plan review letter for your building plans. It may be that your geotechnical engineer will require geologic information be available prior to completing the report and recommendations.

**What is the process to apply for an exception?**

Make application at the Recovery Permit Center. Reach the RPC by email [rpc@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:rpc@santacruzcounty.us), phone 831-454-5323, or [Make an appointment today](#).. Office hours are Monday-Friday 8am-Noon and 1-5pm.

**What Can I Do to Make Progress in Advance of Applying?**

Apply for a Pre-Application Clearance if one has not been completed. Consult with your design professionals about the exception.

**Please contact the Recovery Permit Center at [rpc@countyofsantacruz.us](mailto:rpc@countyofsantacruz.us) or (831) 454 5323 if you have questions or need assistance.**