



Exemption of Foundation and Soils Investigations

Purpose

The 2022 California Building Code (CBC) Section 1803.2 defines when a site-specific foundation and soils investigation for building and foundation systems are required. This directive provides the criteria to determine what projects may be exempted from a soils investigation. It also delineates the minimum requirements for the design and construction of the foundations systems.

Code References

CBC Section 1803.2 Exception: The building official shall be permitted to waive the requirement for a geotechnical investigation where satisfactory data from adjacent areas is available that demonstrates an investigation is not necessary for any of the conditions in Section 1803.5.1 through 1803.5.6 and Sections 1803.5.10 and 1803.5.11.

Findings

1. The following are general criteria to determine when foundation and soils investigations may be exempted:
 - a. A site-specific study may be exempted for buildings that are classified in Risk Category I per CBC Table 1604.5 (i.e., agricultural facilities, temporary facilities, sheds, private detached garages, and pools).
 - b. Unless otherwise required by the building official, a site-specific study may be exempted for projects meeting all the following criteria:
 - i. New single family or duplex residential buildings classified as R-3 occupancy.
 - ii. The buildings are no more than 2 stories in height and do not contain a basement.
 - iii. The site currently or previously supports a structure supported on continuous foundations and isolated spread footings with no known foundation issues.
 - iv. The proposed foundation system matches the foundation system present on the site.
 - c. Site-specific soils investigations may be exempted for projects meeting all the following criteria:
 - i. Additions or alterations to existing single family or duplex residential buildings classified as R-3 occupancy.
 - ii. The buildings are no more than 2 stories in height and do not contain a basement.
 - iii. The proposed foundation system matches the foundation system present on the site.

2. When a site-specific foundation and soils report investigation is exempted, the building and foundation systems shall comply with the following general guidelines based on their location:
 - a. Non-Geologic Hazard Zones:
 - i. The minimum depth of footings shall be 18 inches below the undisturbed ground surface.
 - ii. The maximum allowable foundation pressure shall not exceed 1500 psf.
 - iii. The maximum allowable lateral bearing shall not exceed 100 psf.
 - iv. Specified compressive strength of concrete shall not be less than 2500 psi.

(Note: a site-specific study may still be required by the City Geologist)
 - b. Geologic Hazard Zones:
 - i. The minimum depth of footings shall be 18 inches below the undisturbed ground surface.
 - ii. The maximum allowable foundation pressure shall not exceed 1000 psf.
 - iii. The maximum allowable lateral bearing shall not exceed 100 psf.
 - iv. Specified compressive strength of concrete shall not be less than 2500 psi.

(Note: a site-specific study may still be required by the City Geologist)
3. Sites where an existing soils report is on record must include the requirements of that report in the project design and site preparation.
4. Exemption from the foundation and soils investigation requirements shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be performed in any manner in violation of the requirements set forth in Chapter 18 of the CBC, including meeting setbacks from ascending or descending slopes per CBC Section 1808.7.