



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AND GRADING PERMIT

Geotechnical Study Requirements

CITY OF SAN DIEGO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 301, SAN DIEGO, CA 92101
CALL (619) 446-5300 FOR APPOINTMENTS AND (619) 446-5000 FOR INFORMATION

INFORMATION
BULLETIN

515

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This information bulletin describes the minimum submittal requirements for geotechnical and geological reports that may be required for development permits, subdivision approvals or grading permits. Geotechnical report requirements for building permits are contained in Land Development Code Section 145.0203, Table 145-02A.

Geologic conditions exist within the City of San Diego that can pose serious problems when land is developed. Unstable slopes, slide-prone geologic formations, faults and liquefaction-prone soils occur in many parts of the City. The relative risk of these potential conditions has been mapped as part City of San Diego Seismic Safety Study (SSS). The maps indicate where potentially adverse geological conditions may exist. The conditions will require some level of evaluation by a State licensed geologist or civil engineer, or both. Correction of these conditions may often create unintended environmental impacts which must be addressed during the development permit phase of the project. The Geologic Hazard Category is identified on the SSS maps and is provided on the Parcel Information Checklist (DS-302).

I. REQUIRED GEOTECHNICAL STUDY

Table 515A describes which type of geotechnical study is required based upon the geologic hazard category as identified on the San Diego Seismic Safety Study (SSS) and the Land Use Group (see Table 515B). The study identified in Table 515A is required at project submittal unless a written request for exception is provided. Such request must identify the criteria under which the exception is justified per the "Exceptions to Study Requirements" listed below.

II. EXCEPTIONS TO STUDY REQUIREMENTS

Geotechnical reports are not required for development permits for the following conditions. Exceptions are not allowed for Tentative Maps, Subdivision Approvals or Grading Permits.

- A. In zones 53 or 54 - where the topography is flat (slope angle less than 4:1 or 14 degrees), where no Environmentally Sensitive Lands (as defined by Land Development Code Section 143.0101) will be impacted, or where no habitable space is proposed.

Documents referenced in this Information Bulletin

- Environmental Sensitive Lands Regulations ([SDMC, Section 143.0101](#))
- Foundation and Retaining Walls ([SDMC, Section 145.0203](#))
- [Information Bulletin 513, Preliminary Review](#)
- Parcel Information Checklist ([DS-302](#))
- Technical Guidelines for Geotechnical Reports

B. In zones 31 or 32, considered at risk for liquefaction, the study can be deferred to the construction permit phase if no Environmentally Sensitive Lands are likely to be impacted, or where no habitable space is proposed.

C. In zones 12 or 13 - Studies may be deferred to construction permit phase where no habitable space is proposed.

D. In zones 32, 48 and 51-55 - Residential additions up to 500 square feet may not require a geotechnical study at the time of submittal. The determination for a geotechnical study will be made during the first review. To determine if a report will be required prior to project submittal, you may request a preliminary review, see Information Bulletin 513, Preliminary Review, for information on the preliminary review process.

III. REPORTS

There are three types of geotechnical reports that may be required at submittal for development permits, subdivision approvals, or grading permits. A brief description of each is as follows (for complete descriptions and minimum standards refer to the City's "Technical Guidelines for Geotechnical Reports" available at the Records Section of the Development Services Center):

A. Preliminary Soils Report (SR). This report is the result of an initial geotechnical investigation conducted to evaluate existing site conditions in order to obtain general soil and stability information. This basic report is required for all projects involving grading, and when development is located within geologic

hazard zones considered risky for the type of development proposed.

B. Geologic Reports.

1. Geologic Reconnaissance Report (GR)

A preliminary study called a GR is required for minor projects or when the level of risk is considered low due to the suspected geologic hazard mapped at the site. This report generally includes a visit to the site and a review of available records, maps, and photographs that might provide information about the geotechnical conditions at the site.

2. Geotechnical Investigation Report (GI)

When there is a higher risk, such as when a fault or landslide is suspected nearby or when the reconnaissance finds evidence of a significant hazard on the site,

a GI may be required. The investigation would include field work, such as trench excavations and/or borings, geologic mapping, soil samples, laboratory analysis, and a thorough evaluation of all encountered geotechnical hazards.

Refer to Table 515A and 515B to determine which type of report is required for your project.

NOTE: These are minimum submittal requirements. The geotechnical study and subsequent review may discover or identify adverse geologic or geotechnical conditions which cannot be addressed without more extensive investigation as determined by the consultant. In that case, additional investigation may be required to evaluate and provide recommendations to correct the condition prior to approving the project or prior to issuing subsequent construction permits.

Table 515A / Required Geotechnical Study

Hazard Category	Group I	Group II	Group III	Group IV	Group V	Group VI	Group VII
11,13, 21, 31, 41	GI	GI	GI	GI	GI	GI	SR
12, 22-27,42-47	GI	GI	GI	GI	GR	GI	SR
32, 48, 51-55	GR	GI	GR *	GR	--	--	SR

GI = Geotechnical Investigation Report

GR = Geologic Reconnaissance Report

SR = Preliminary Soils Report

* = Recommended

Table 515B / Project Approval Group

Group I	Tentative and Vesting Tentative Maps, Map Waivers not listed in Group VI
Group II	Grading Permits(including self certification) (also see Group VII)
Group III	Neighborhood or Site Development Permits for Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Coastal Development Permits
Group IV	Planned Development Permits
Group V	Conditional Use Permits
Group VI	Map Waivers and Tentative Maps for Condominium Conversions/Creations (residential or commercial)
Group VII	Grading Permits for underground storage tank removal and/or soil remediation