

Geologic Hazard Assessments (GHA's)



What is a Geologic Hazard Assessment?

A geologic hazard assessment is a summary of the potential geologic hazards present at a site that may affect your project. GHA's are generally conducted by the County geologic staff; however GHA's can be done by an outside consulting geologist and submitted for review.

When is a Geologic Hazard Assessment Required?

A geologic hazard assessment may be required for all *development activities* in the following designated areas:

- fault zones,
- mapped landslides and areas subject to debris flows,
- 100-year floodplains and floodways, and
- coastal hazard areas,
- A geologic hazard assessment shall also be required for *development* located in other areas of geologic hazard, as identified by the County Geologist or designee, using available technical resources, from environmental review, or from other field review.

What is a Geologic Hazard?

A geologically hazardous condition exists when life and/or property are threatened by geologic or hydrologic processes. In Santa Cruz County, areas subject to hazardous

conditions are shown on a series of hazard maps. Some examples of Geologic Hazards include:

- Fault Zones
- Areas prone to flooding such as floodplains and floodways
- Liquefaction Zones
- Coastal Bluffs
- Coastal Beaches
- Areas subject to landsliding or debris flows

How Can I Obtain a Geologic Hazard Assessment (GHA)?

1. Contact County geologic staff to discuss the proposed scope of work first.
2. Applications for GHA's are prepared online and the following are minimum submittal requirements:
 - a site/topographic plan indicating the proposed development including septic locations and all access ways to buildings
 - building plans and pertinent geologic/geotechnical reports (if developed)
 - payment of the application fee
3. Please stake the corners of the building site and septic location in the field.

How is it Processed?

County geologic staff will conduct a site visit, consult hazards maps, and write an evaluation of the site conditions and permit requirements. Possible requirements from the evaluation include:

- Preparation of an engineering geologic report prepared by a State-registered geologist
- A soils report prepared by a geotechnical engineer or a registered civil engineer who specializes in geotechnical engineering

Any required geologic, soil, or other technical report shall be completed, reviewed and accepted pursuant to the provisions of this section before any public hearing is scheduled and before any discretionary or development application is approved or issued. The County Geologist may agree to defer the date for completion, review, or acceptance of any technical report where the technical information is 1) unlikely to significantly affect the size or location of the project, and 2) the project is not in the area of the Coastal Zone where decisions are appealable to the Coastal Commission. In no event shall such be deferred until after the approval or issuance of a building permit

Conditions of Approval

When the geologic hazards assessment and any additional reports have been completed, the County Geologic staff will state what conditions of approval will be placed on the building or development permit, such as:

- Project modification or relocation
- Grading and drainage requirements
- Meeting all report recommendations
- Elevation of the structure
- Using a specified envelope for the septic system leach field
- Filing a Notice of Geologic Hazards with the County Recorder

Appeals

Decisions which enforce provisions of the Geologic Hazards Ordinance may be appealed to the Planning Director. See the [Planning Appeals](#) brochure

Can We Help You?

If you have any questions regarding the Geologic Hazards Assessment process or whether a GHA might be required for your project, please contact County Geologic staff geologichazards@santacruzcounty.us