



Flood Hazard Area Regulations

Bulletin 68

Division of Development Engineering, January 2021

Purpose

The goal of Pierce County Flood Regulations is to reduce flood losses and to minimize development impacts to surrounding properties. Flood losses include life, personal property, revenue, business losses along with many other potential forms of loss.

An Introduction to the Flood Hazards

Flooding is the temporary covering of normally dry land with tidal waters, surface water (rain) or ground water. Certain flooding types carry increased risks to life, safety and property. Areas that can be flooded include land near streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, low areas and coastal areas. Flooding can cause damage to structures, septic drain fields and other property.

To protect citizens and their property, Pierce County has adopted standards for regulating development in a Flood Hazard Area. This bulletin has been designed to assist you in applying for a permit on a parcel located in a Flood Hazard Area and to provide you with assistance in understanding the Flood Hazard Regulations.

How do I know if my project is in a Flood Hazard Area?

If you currently own a property or are looking at purchasing a property that may be in a flood hazard area, you first need to determine the limits of the flood hazard area.

Flood hazard area mapping can be found using the Pierce County [PublicGIS](#).



Alternatively, you can request a flood map at piercecountywa.org/flood

Now what?

If your project can be located outside of a flood hazard area, the permitting process can be significantly simplified. Flood hazard areas are typically interconnected with other critical areas, such as, shorelines, wetlands, etc. Avoiding the flood hazard area can often eliminate other potential permitting processes and development requirements.

If you cannot avoid the flood hazard area, then additional permitting and development requirements are needed prior to issuing a building permit. The requirements for your project will become more stringent depending on the type of flood hazard area your project is located in. If your project is located in a flood hazard area, contact the Pierce County Development Center at 253-798-3739 or request a [submittal standard](#).

If it cannot be determined whether your project is in a flood hazard area, you may be asked to hire a civil engineer to prepare a flood study and/or a surveyor to prepare a flood boundary delineation survey. Development in some flood hazard areas is prohibited. In other flood hazard areas, development requirements can include elevating your structure, providing access and other mitigation based on the proposed project.

Common Questions and Answers

Q: Where can I find the Flood Regulations?

A: Pierce County flood regulations and can be found at [Pierce County Code Title 18E.70](#).

Q: Are there any development activities that are exempt from the Flood Regulations?

A: Yes, exempt development activities can be found in [Pierce County Code Title 18E.20](#).

Q: If a development project is not exempt, but cannot meet the requirements of the Flood Regulations, is there a process to request a variance?

A: Yes, variance information can be found in [Pierce County Code Title 18E.20](#).

Q: What if I am asked to submit a flood study?

A: If you are being asked to submit a flood study, your project is located too close to the flood hazard area and the base flood elevation is not known. You will need to hire a licensed civil engineer to prepare the study. Once the study is approved, you may also need to submit a flood boundary delineation survey.

Q: What if I am asked to submit a flood boundary delineation survey?

A: If you are being asked to submit a flood boundary delineation survey, it means that the Development Engineer did not have enough information to determine that your development was taking place outside of the flood hazard area. You will need to hire a licensed surveyor to map the base flood elevation on the property.

Q: Can I bring fill material onto a parcel that is in a flood area?

A: When allowed, filling in a flood area requires a permit and must be mitigated. For more information, see [Pierce County Code Title 18E.70](#).

Q: What is an "Elevation Certificate"? How do I know if I need one?

A: The form is completed by a surveyor and is required for all regulated structures built in a Flood Hazard Area. The Elevation Certificate is a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) document that is required for obtaining flood insurance. This document describes the relationship of the insured structure and its components relative to the base flood elevation.

Q: My insurance or mortgage company wants me to get a copy of an Elevation Certificate. Does Pierce County keep Elevation Certificates on file?

A: Yes. You can get a copy of an Elevation Certificate for structures built in unincorporated Pierce County. You can search for any approved Elevation Certificates at the [online dashboard](#) by entering your property information and searching the documents tab. Otherwise, contact the Permit Information Line at 253-798-3739 and asked to be transferred to the Development Engineering Technical Support Section.

Q: I have a structure that has been damaged by a flood. How do the Flood Regulations apply?

A: See Bulletin Number 56, Flood Damage.

Q: I think the flood map is wrong for my property, who do I contact?

A: Contact [Surface Water Management](#) at 253-798-2725.