



CASCADE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

"Working Together to Provide Efficient and Effective Public Service"

FLOODPLAIN CONSTRUCTION CERTIFICATE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

The Planning Department is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Cascade County Floodplain Regulations within Cascade County, exclusive of the incorporated towns and cities of Great Falls, Belt, Cascade, and Neihart, which include review of Floodplain Permit Applications and all materials in support, permitting, and inspection.

PURPOSE

For participation in the Community Rating System (CRS), Cascade County must maintain Elevation Certificates (ECs) and other construction certifications on all new, substantially improved, or reconstructed buildings in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). All new permits and certifications issued are reviewed by a CRS Specialist during the annual recertification process and may affect eligibility for CRS discounts. This document is meant to explain the management procedures for review of Construction Certificates.

TYPES OF CONSTRUCTION CERTIFICATES

Construction Certificates include:

- Copies of all Elevation Certificates
- FEMA's Floodproofing Certificate for Non-Residential Structures
- V Zone Design Certificates for buildings in coastal, high-hazard areas.
NOTE: Cascade County has no V Zones.
- FEMA's Residential Basement Floodproofing Certificate, if applicable
- Engineered Opening Certification attached to the Elevation Certificate, if applicable
- Other permits and certifications required by the Cascade County Floodplain Administrator

WHEN CONSTRUCTION CERTIFICATES REQUIRED

When any new construction, substantial improvement, or repair for a substantially damaged building is conducted in the SFHA, the Planning Department shall require an Elevation Certificate and any other floodplain-related certificate that is appropriate for the development.

"Construction Drawing" and "Building Under Construction" Elevation Certificates

The Applicant shall submit an Elevation Certificate marked "construction drawings" with the Floodplain Permit Application. This Elevation Certificate shall be used to determine if the proposed design is in compliance with the Cascade County Floodplain Regulations and the Cascade County Zoning Regulations. The Applicant may also submit an Elevation Certificate

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marked “building under construction” with the Floodplain Permit Application where a foundation is built and the elevation of the lowest floor is determined.

“Finished-Construction” Elevation Certificates

Once construction on the building is finished and all adjacent grading is finalized, a complete and correct “finished-construction” Elevation Certificate must be submitted by the Applicant to show the “as-built” characteristics of the building. A “finished-construction” Elevation Certificate must be received, reviewed, and corrected (if necessary) before the final approval of the Floodplain Permit is issued. At this point, all other required certificates must also be submitted and reviewed.

If the Floodproofing Certificate for Non-Residential Structures is required for a floodproofed non-residential building, and Elevation Certificate is not required for purposes of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP, be we will require one to help verify compliance with the Cascade County Floodplain Regulations. A complete and correct Floodproofing Certificate is required to be submitted to the Planning Department once construction is finished on the building before issuing a Certificate of Completion.

Engineered Flood Openings Certification

When engineered flood openings are installed in the foundation of a building, and the Elevation Certificate indicates that they were installed (Section A8d and A9d on the Elevation Certificate), an Engineered Opening Certification is required to be submitted with the Elevation Certificate to help verify compliance and the insurance rate. Be sure the developer submits either the International Code Council Evaluation Services (ICC-ES) form for the engineered opening or an individual certification. Individual certifications must cover the following, at a minimum:

- 1) An identification of the building (address) that has the engineered openings installed;
- 2) The design professional’s name, title, address, type of license, the state issuing the license, signature, and seal;
- 3) A statement certifying the design of the openings will automatically equalize hydrostatic flood loads on exterior walls by allowing for the automatic entry and exit of floodwaters; and
- 4) A description of the range of flood characteristics tested or computed for which the certification is valid, such as rates of rise and fall of floodwaters.

REVIEWING CONSTRUCTION CERTIFICATES

All finished-construction Elevation Certificates shall be submitted initially to the Planning Department for tracking and initial review. The Planner will log the Elevation Certificate in the tracking system, and then reviews it and all supporting documentation for initial compliance. The Certificate of Completion will not be issued until all problems with an Elevation Certificate and supporting documentation are resolved.



CORRECTING CERTIFICATES

The Planner should consult the CRS's Elevation Certificate Checklist when reviewing an Elevation Certificate to ensure all required fields are completed correctly. When an error is noticed on an Elevation Certificate, there are three (3) ways to correct it.

- 1) For any inaccurate or incomplete information in Section C2, the Planner should request a new certificate from the Applicant or their representative (e.g., surveyor, engineer, architect) who certified the form.
- 2) If incomplete or inaccurate information is found in the other sections, the Planner can do the following. NOTE: Do not mark up a signed and sealed form.
 - a. The forms may be returned to the Applicant, or their representative, with instructions on what needs to be changed or corrected;
 - b. The Planner can prepare a separate memo with the correct information and attach a "Memo of Correction." When the certificate is provided to an inquirer, the memo must be included with it; or
 - c. The Planner can note the changes or correction in Section G.

All finished-construction Elevation Certificates with errors should be returned to the Applicant within ten (10) business days. In no case shall we accept a finished-construction Elevation Certificate until all corrections deemed appropriate by the Planner are addressed. In no case shall a Certificate of Completion for a permit be granted until the Planner has approved the permit.

If corrections are completed after the Certificate of Completion is issued, the Planner must ensure the homeowner receives a copy of the corrected Elevation Certificate in case the correction(s) would affect the building's insurance rating.

MAINTAINING CERTIFICATES

All Elevation Certificates and all required Construction Certificates, as well as all other permit application documentation, shall be stored at the Cascade County Planning Department located at 121 4th St. N, STE 2H/I, Great Falls, Montana. They also shall be scanned into the electronic storage system. Copies of the "finished-construction" Elevation Certificates, along with the other required Construction Certificates (if applicable), shall also be placed in a separate folder containing all Elevation Certificate information for CRS purposes, labeled "Activity 310," organized by CRS recertification date. All other state and local records retention schedules shall be observed.

Elevation Certificates and other required certificates for buildings located outside the Special Flood Hazard Area are to be filled with the Location/Conformance Permit, but copies should be made and placed in a separate CRS folder, labeled "Activity 430."



MAKING CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE TO INQUIRERS

When a member of the public requests a copy of an Elevation Certificate, the request shall be initiated by submitting the Public Document Copy/Inspection Request form. The Planner shall act on the request within five (5) business days to make the copy and/or make the document available for inspection. Any document copies are subject to the Planning Department's Fee Schedule.

Effective Date:

November 30, 2021

ASSOCIATED FORMS

- CRS's Elevation Certificate Checklist
- Certificate of Completion
- Public Document Copy/Inspection Request

