



Public Information

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency • Planning Division
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Seismic Hazards & Earthquake Fault Zones

General Information about Seismic Hazards & Earthquake Fault Zones on Private and Public Property

What are Seismic Hazards and Earthquake Fault Zones?

Seismic Hazard Zones are regulatory zones that encompass areas prone to liquefaction (failure of water-saturated sediments and areas subject to earthquake induced landslides). Guidelines for the evaluation of these hazards are published in Special Publication 117 by the California Geological Survey.

An Earthquake Fault Zone is an area delineated by state officials to have an active fault within it and have the potential for surface rupture. These zones were created by the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones Act.

What does it mean to be located within a Seismic Hazard Zone?

It means that the State has determined that a potential for liquefaction or earthquake-induced landslides may affect the property. These potential hazards must be disclosed upon sale of the property and must be evaluated prior to obtaining a building or grading permit.

How do these zones affect my property?

A site-specific investigation by a licensed engineering geologist and/or civil engineer is required prior to obtaining a building permit for habitable structures or to sub-divide the property.

An already developed property will need to disclose the presence of the zone and additions to the existing structures may require a site investigation.

How are Earthquake Fault Hazards different than Seismic Hazards?

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act (1972) formerly known as the Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone Act exists to prevent the construction of buildings for human occupancy on the surface trace of active faults. This Act addresses only the potential hazard of surface fault rupture and is not directed toward other hazards associated with earthquakes.

Seismic Hazards Mapping Act

The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act (1990) addresses non-surface fault rupture earthquake hazards, including liquefaction, lateral spreading and seismically induced landslides.

How do these Acts work?

The law requires the State geologist to establish regulatory zones (Zones of Required Investigation) and to issue appropriate maps (both Earthquake Fault Zones and Seismic Hazard Zone maps) that delineate the zones. These maps are distributed to all affected cities, counties, and state agencies for their use in planning decisions.

Does it affect my house?

Single family frame dwellings up to two stories and not part of a development of four or more units are exempt from the state requirements. However, the Ventura County General Plan requires structures for human occupancy to follow the state guidelines. In addition, the Uniform Building Code also requires two story structures to be evaluated for liquefaction.

What is the Natural Hazards Disclosure Act?

Effective June 1, 1998, the Natural Hazards Disclosure Act requires that sellers of real property and their agents provide prospective buyers with a "Natural Hazard Disclosure Statement" when the property being sold lies within any mapped hazard areas.

What must be disclosed when I buy or sell real estate?

The fact that a property is located in an Earthquake Fault Zone or Seismic Hazard Zone must be disclosed to a potential buyer before the sales process is complete. The real estate agent is legally bound to present this information to the buyer. When no realtor is involved, the seller must inform the buyer directly. This is usually done at the time an offer is made or accepted.

How can I find out if a property is located in a Seismic Hazard Zone or Earthquake Fault Zone?

The Ventura County Resource Management Agency is the location of Seismic Hazard Zone Maps that affect Ventura County (Public Resources Code 2696c).

Where can I get more information?

A detailed description of the Seismic Hazards program and its regulations are presented in DMG Special Publication 117.

A detailed description of the Earthquake Fault Zone (Alquist-Priolo) program, an index of Earthquake Fault Zone maps and the Act and its regulations are presented in DMG Special Publication 42.

For more information, see the California Geological Survey (formerly the California Division of Mines and Geology).

Web site: www.consrv.ca.gov/cgs

Contact a local Licensed California Civil Engineer (P.E. or G.E.) or Engineering Geologist (C.E.G.)

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For general information on these issues, call the Ventura County Planning Division at 805/654-2488.

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