

Grading Permits for Thomas Fire: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Do I need a grading permit?

A: A grading permit may be required when:

- Removal and re-compaction of soil is to a depth greater than five feet;
- New building footprint extends more than five feet from old footprint;
- Property in the Ondulando area identified with settlement issues;
- House is located close to the bottom or top of a slope;
- New areas of cut or fill proposed;
- New retaining walls three feet or greater in height with surcharge.

For additional information, please click [here](#).

Q: Since the Thomas Fire what measures have been made to process grading permits?

A: The City Engineer has streamlined the grading permit process by assessing properties with lower risk and exempting approximately 75% of the houses affected by the Thomas Fire from the need for a separate set of plans and reviews for grading.

Q: Why are grading permits in the Ventura Hillsides unique to other areas in the city?

A: The Ondulando area was built between 1959 and 1961 and was the subject of a lawsuit in 1967 related to faulty grading construction techniques. These issues can also be found in other areas of the Ventura Hillsides.

Q: What are common grading construction techniques?

A: A common approach to hillside construction is to cut the hilltops and fill in the valleys after removing trees, bushes, grass and topsoil to ensure proper compaction of the new dirt. As a result, the original grading in the Ondulando area and other areas of the Ventura Hillsides do not appear to have used common grading techniques.

Q: What is the Crest Engineering Report?

A: The Crest Engineering Report was an extensive geotechnical investigation completed in 1967 to include maps and parcel-by-parcel data regarding the hillsides' known issues of settlement and slope stability. Many established local geotechnical engineering firms have a copy of this report.

Q: Why do I need a separate set of plans and reviews for grading?

A: If your house was located on a lot with undocumented fill or if your house was located close to the top or bottom of a hill, you may need to have a full scope of services with your geotechnical engineer to ensure you have an adequate number of deep borings to test the soil compaction of the deep fill or have your geotechnical engineer make recommendations about the safety of a hill next to your house.

Q: I do need a separate set of plans and reviews for grading. What are my next steps?

A: We encourage residents to bring their preliminary building plans to our Engineering team for initial consultation. You should obtain your grading review, approval and permit before obtaining your building permit. Though many people decide to select an architect and discuss floorplans prior to any other consultations, the input from a structural, geotechnical or even a civil engineer will ensure the safety and stability of your foundation as well as help expedite your grading permit process.

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