Grading Permits

Grading is the movement of dirt, both cut (removal of dirt from an area) and fill (placement of dirt in an area). Grading also refers to stump removal during logging operations. If you are doing any of these for your project, you must know the volume of dirt you will be moving.

Why is Stormwater Important for Grading Permits?

The State regulates the County's stormwater program. The County is required to review and inspect all grading and drainage projects for potential stormwater impacts. Stormwater rules are complex. Generally, grading projects trigger the following levels of drainage review:

- Abbreviated Drainage Review
- Abbreviated Drainage Review – Engineered
- Full Drainage Review

When is a Grading Permit Required?

Grading permits are required when a building permit is not required and when any of the following apply:

- Grading activities that result in the movement of 150 cubic yards or more of earth.
- Grading activities that will result in a temporary or permanent slope having a steepness exceeding 3H:1V and having a total slope height, measured vertically from toe of slope to top of slope, exceeding 5 feet.
- Grading activities that include the construction of embankment berms which will result in the impoundment of water to a depth exceeding eighteen inches and/or with a maximum volume exceeding two thousand five hundred cubic feet of water.
- Grading activities that will result in the diversion of existing drainage courses, both natural and manmade, from their natural point of entry or exit from the grading site.
- Any land clearing or grading on slopes steeper than thirty percent, or within the mandatory setback of a steep slope, wetland, stream, lake, or Puget Sound, as established by other titles of this code.

****Note: Excavating for foundations is exempt and does not need to be counted towards total grading quantities.**

Which Grading Permit do I Need?

A grading permit is required if a building permit is not required. The following grading volumes require a Site Development Activity Permit (SDAP):

Grading Quantity	Required Permit Type
Less than 150 cubic yards	SDAP Minor Grading**
150-499 cubic yards	SDAP Grading 1
500-4,999 cubic yards	SDAP Grading 2
5,000+ cubic yards	SDAP Grading 3

**SDAP Minor Grading is required when a building permit is not required and any of the following apply:

- Grading of more than one cubic yard in critical areas
- Clearing of more than one cubic yard in critical areas
- More than 7,000 square feet of clearing proposed outside of critical area buffers
- More than 2,000 square feet of impervious surface is proposed

Grading Permit Exemptions

The following grading activities shall not require the issuance of a site development activity permit so long as there is less than one acre of land disturbing activity:

- Excavation for utilities, or for wells or tunnels allowed under separate permit by other agencies;
- An excavation below finished grade for basements and footings of a building, retaining wall or other structure authorized by a valid building permit. This shall not exempt the placement of any fill material removed from such an excavation, and shall not exempt any excavation beyond the limits of the basement or footing excavations nor exempt excavations having an unsupported height greater than five feet after the completion of such a structure;
- Agricultural crop management outside of critical drainage areas limited to the preparation of soil by turning, discing or other means endorsed by the Kitsap County conservation district;
- Excavation for cemetery graves;
- Landscape installation where fill is confined to less than one foot of topsoil and land disturbing activities are limited to less than three-fourths acre;
- The disposal of solid waste, wood waste, problem waste and demolition waste authorized pursuant to Chapter 70.95 RCW, and regulations presently enacted or as may be amended or as specifically approved by the Kitsap County health district;
- Mining, quarrying, excavating, processing and/or stockpiling of rock, sand, gravel, aggregate or clay where established and provided by law, and a permit for said activity has been issued by the state of Washington or the federal government, provided such operations do not affect the lateral support or increase the stresses in or pressure upon any adjacent or contiguous land and the activities meet the minimum requirements of this title;
- Exploratory excavations under the direction of a qualified professional engineer;
- Grading activities already approved by separate permit granted by any governing authority; provided, that the activities meet the minimum requirements of this title;
- Emergency sandbagging, diking, ditching, filling or similar work during or after periods of extreme weather conditions when done to protect life or property;

- Maintenance activities within public rights-of-way performed by Kitsap County personnel. However, exemption from the site development activity permit does not constitute an exemption from the other requirements of this title.

Is an Engineer Required?

An engineered grading plan is required for all projects that include:

- Any land clearing or grading within critical area buffers OR
- Clearing of 1 acre or more OR
- Grading of 5,000 cubic yards or more

How Do I Calculate Grading Volume?

To estimate your grading quantity in cubic yards (cy) use the following equation:

$$\textit{Depth of soil disturbance FT * Area of grading SF} = \frac{cubic\ ft\ of\ grading}{27} = \textit{Cubic yards of grading}$$

The depth of soil disturbance (in ft.) is multiplied by the total area of grading in square feet, which will be the grading volume in cubic feet. This number is then divided by 27 to convert from cubic feet to cubic yards.

Additional Considerations

There may be additional requirements for impacts to critical areas. SEPA review may apply.

More Questions?

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