



Apple Hill Arboriculture

EL DORADO COUNTY, CA

LANDOWNERS GUIDE

Any individual or group of individuals who own the property on which they plan to construct, alter, repair, improve, or remodel a building or structure is considered an owner-builder.

California State Contractors Board (CSLB)

https://www.cslb.ca.gov/consumers/building_officials/owner_builder_overview.aspx

An owner-builder is exempt from licensure, but there are limitations.

A license is not required if:

- The owner-builder does the work himself or herself or through his or her own employees with wages as their sole compensation and the structure(s) is/are not intended for sale.

- The owner-builder contracts with properly licensed subcontractor(s).
(This exemption applies to the construction of a single-family residential structure and limits the number of structures intended or offered for sale to four or fewer in a calendar year.)

- The owner-builder contracts with a General Building ("B") contractor. (The number of structures is then unlimited.)

Property owners are prohibited from performing well-drilling work covered under the Well Drilling (C-57) classification.

El Dorado County, California

<https://www.edcgov.us/government/Planning>

GRADING

Grading permits are required within the unincorporated area of the County of El Dorado to safeguard life, limb, health, property and public welfare; to avoid pollution of watercourses; and to ensure that the intended use of a graded site is consistent with the [General Plan](#), any Specific Plans, the [Storm Water Management Plan](#), [California Fire Safe Standards](#), and applicable [County of El Dorado ordinances](#) including the [Zoning Ordinance](#) and the California Building Code.

If the property is within the architecturally controlled area of [El Dorado Hills Community Service District](#) or the [Cameron Park Community Services District](#) approval of the plans from the district prior to permit issuance is a requirement. Failure to obtain approval may delay issuance of your grading permit. Check with your individual association for any restrictions that may affect your grading plan. Even though Building Services does not enforce these restrictions, you may be subject to a civil action.

FAQs:

- Do I need a Permit? [Grading Ordinance Applicability and Exemptions](#)
- Who can prepare a grading or site plan? [Qualifications of Grading Plan Preparers](#)
- What should my submittal package contain? [Application Requirements](#)
- Are there inspections and reports required? [Technical Report Requirements](#)
- What will the permit cost? [Fees](#)
- Are there standards I must use? [Design Standards Summary](#)
- Are there special grading requirements in the Tahoe Basin? [Tahoe Basin Special Conditions](#)

Helpful Links:

- [Residential Driveway Slope Policy](#)
- [Grading Ordinance](#) [.pdf]
- [Design and Improvement Standards Manual, Volume III](#) [.pdf]
- [California SRA Firesafe regulations](#)
- [Storm Water Management Plan](#)
- [Construction Dust Management](#)

Element & Erosion

Who can apply: A grading permit application can be submitted by the following entities:

- The landowner of record.
- A licensed contractor acting as agent for the landowner. The contractor must have an active [State of California Contractor's License](#) and a current [El Dorado County Business License](#).
- Any person authorized in writing to act as agent for the landowner. A notarized Letter of Authorization signed by the landowner is required in this circumstance.

Application requirements: Upon the determination that a grading permit is required, an application must be submitted to the Development Services Department Permit Center to begin County review. The application must include an [application form](#) and submittal checklist, and grading plans that include the following components:

Grading plans: Grading plans submitted to the County in support of a permit application shall be prepared by qualified individuals as discussed in the “qualifications” section and shall include the following:

1. **Certification:** The signature and professional stamp of a Civil Engineer except as provided in the “qualifications” section below.
2. **Plan size:** Plans shall be submitted on sheets 24 inches by 36 inches unless an alternate paper size has been approved by the Director.
3. **Number of copies:** A minimum of three complete sets of grading plans shall be submitted.
4. **Title block:** Plans shall be entitled "Grading Plan" and state the purpose of the proposed grading. The name of the engineer responsible for plan preparation and the Project Engineer shall be listed. The title block shall be located at the lower right corner or along the right edge of the plan sheet.
5. **Topographic features:** Accurate contour lines drawn at intervals not greater than two feet of elevation, unless an alternate interval has been authorized by the Director, depicting topographic features and drainage patterns and the configuration of the ground before and after grading in the area proposed to be disturbed and immediately adjacent areas, relative to a bench mark established on-site. Topographic maps shall be prepared by an engineer, surveyor or other qualified person.
6. **Limits of grading:** The plans shall clearly delineate the boundaries between areas of cut, areas of fill placement, and areas that would remain at natural or pre-existing grade.
7. **Property boundaries:** Property lines and easements shall be clearly marked.
8. **Construction details:** Construction details for roads (including structural pavement sections), man-made watercourses, culverts, bridges and drainage devices, retaining walls, cribbing, dams, and other improvements existing or to be constructed, together with supporting calculations and maps as required.
9. **Cross sections:** Cross-sections, profiles, elevations, dimensions and construction details shall be provided based on accurate field data.
10. **Erosion control:** A detailed erosion and sediment control plan prepared consistent with the standards listed below.
11. **Landscape plan:** When required by the Director, a landscaping plan, including temporary erosion control plantings, permanent drought-resistant slope plantings, replacement of temporary groundcover, and irrigation facilities. (Not required for an Agricultural Grading Permit.)
12. **Material volume estimate:** An estimate of the quantities of excavation and fill, adjusted for anticipated swell or shrinkage.
13. **Stockpiles and borrow sites:** The location of any on-site stockpile, borrow site, or location for storage of surplus material.
14. **Project Engineer:** The name and contact information of the Project Engineer shall be identified on the plans.
15. **Certificate block:** A Certificate block (i.e. signature block for licensed professionals) as required by the Director, shall be provided on the cover sheet of the project plans.
16. **Cost estimate:** The applicant shall submit a detailed cost estimate covering the proposed work, except if the project is limited to the grading associated with a single family dwelling.

Erosion and sediment control plans: Erosion and sediment control plans shall comply with the adopted [County Storm Water Management Plan \(SWMP\)](#) and all of the following:

1. **General requirements:**

1. Erosion and sediment control plans shall be designed to prevent increased discharge of sediment at all stages of grading and development from initial disturbance of the ground to project completion and shall be consistent with all local, state, and federal rules and regulations.
2. Plans shall be designed with long-term erosion and sediment control as a primary consideration. Every feasible effort shall be made to ensure that site stabilization is permanent.
3. Plans shall indicate the timing of each erosion control measure proposed relative to the stage of construction.
4. Short-term and long-term erosion control measures must be included in all plans. Implementation of short-term measures, however, may not be necessary based on the timing of completion of grading operations.
5. Runoff shall not be discharged from the site in quantities or at velocities substantially above those which occurred before grading except into drainage facilities found by the Director to be adequate to convey the estimated increase in runoff.

2. **Criteria for when an Erosion Control Plan is required:** An erosion and sediment control plan shall be required whenever:

1. The graded portion of the site includes more than ten thousand (10,000) square feet of area for a non-agricultural grading project or more than one acre of area for an agricultural grading project.
2. There is a significant risk that more than two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet will be unprotected or inadequately protected from erosion during any portion of the rainy season.
3. Grading will occur within twenty feet of any pre-existing watercourse.
4. Grading would occur within the 100-year event flood plain.
5. The Director determines that the grading could potentially result in significant erosion or sediment discharge.

3. **Depiction on plans:** The erosion and sediment control plan need not be a separate sheet if all facilities and measures can be shown on the grading sheets without obscuring the clarity of either the grading plan or the erosion and sediment control plan.

4. **Revegetation:** Erosion and sediment control plans shall include an effective revegetation program to stabilize all disturbed areas which will not be otherwise protected. All such areas where grading has been completed between May 1st and October 15th shall be planted and stabilized as soon as possible after the completion of grading but in no case later than by October 15 or at the recommendation of the Resources Conservation District or the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Graded areas disturbed at other times of the year shall be planted within fifteen days after the completion of the work. If revegetation is infeasible or cannot be expected to stabilize an erodible area with assurance during any part of the rainy season, additional erosion and sediment control measures shall be required as appropriate to prevent increased sediment discharge. During the rainy season, the smallest practical area of erodible land shall be exposed at any one time. Adequate provision shall be made for long-term maintenance of permanent erosion-control vegetation.

5. **Professional recommendations:** Erosion and sediment control plans shall comply with the recommendations of the Civil Engineer, Geotechnical Engineer, Engineering Geologist, or Landscape Architect as incorporated in the approved grading plans.
6. **Engineered facilities:** The structural and hydraulic adequacy of all storm water containment or conveyance facilities shown on the erosion and sediment control plans shall be certified by a Civil Engineer through stamp and signature on the accepted plans. Sufficient calculations and supporting material to demonstrate such adequacy shall accompany the plans when submitted. Adequate provision shall be made for long-term maintenance of permanent erosion-control and sediment-control structures.
7. **Site conditions:** Erosion and sediment control plans shall be designed to address the soil, geologic and precipitation field conditions that can be anticipated during the proposed construction season.
8. **Topsoil salvage:** No topsoil shall be removed from the site unless otherwise directed or authorized by the Director. Topsoil overburden shall be stockpiled and redistributed within the graded area after rough grading to provide a suitable base for seeding and planting. Runoff from the stockpiled area shall be controlled to prevent erosion and resultant sedimentation of receiving water.
9. **Inspection and repair:** Erosion and sediment control plans shall provide specific procedures for inspection and repair of all erosion and sediment control facilities at the close of each working day during the rainy season and for sediment cleanout and vegetation maintenance.
10. **Compliance:** Erosion and sediment control plans shall comply with any and all standards and specifications adopted herein for the control of erosion and sedimentation on grading sites. Vegetation establishment practices shall be in general compliance with the current edition of the *Vegetation Establishment Guidelines for the Sierra Nevada Foothills and Mountains*

Grading Plan Preparers

Qualifications:

In accordance with State Law, the preparers of site grading and drainage plans are required to meet certain licensing qualifications as outlined below.

1. **Topographic surveys:** Surveys of existing grades for the purpose of preparing a site grading and drainage plan shall be performed by either a Land Surveyor or any Civil Engineer.
2. **Grading and Drainage Plan:** Preparation of a site grading and drainage plan must be prepared by a Civil Engineer, except as otherwise allowed under the “waiver” provisions listed below.
3. **Driveway profile:** The preparation of a profile for a driveway shall be prepared by either a Land Surveyor or any Civil Engineer.
4. **Plot plan:** Plot plans indicating the location of all structures relative to property lines must be prepared by a licensed Land Surveyor or a Civil Engineer licensed before January 1, 1982 if the work includes the determination of property boundaries. A Civil Engineer licensed after January 1, 1982 may prepare a plot plan as described above provided that the property boundaries have been delineated on the site by a licensed Land Surveyor (or a Civil Engineer licensed prior to January 1, 1982) in accordance with Section 8726 of the Business and Professions Code. For minor projects that do not involve new buildings, the Director may accept for permit processing alternative information that meets the intent of these requirements.
5. **Plan of existing conditions:** Site plans indicating “existing” drainage and access improvements are considered topographic surveys and must be prepared by a Land Surveyor or Civil Engineer.

Waiver of the requirement for engineer prepared plans:

The requirement that grading plans submitted for County review be prepared, signed and stamped by a Civil Engineer may be waived by the Director if **all** of the following conditions are met:

1. The proposed grading would not endanger public health, safety or welfare.
2. Cuts and fills do not exceed a combined total of five hundred (500) cubic yards.
3. The grading does not involve an access road serving three or more existing or potential residences.
4. A fill intended to support structures is not proposed;
5. All proposed cuts or fills would be designed to avoid adverse affects on any adjacent structure or property;
6. The construction of drainage or sediment-control structures, culverts or facilities would not be required.
7. The alteration of an existing drainage course would not occur;
8. An unstable slope condition would not be created..
9. The grading would not affect the channelized flow of the 100-year storm event.
10. The plan is prepared by the property owner of record for the subject parcel as allowed under Section 6744 of the Business and Professions Code.
11. The submitted plans meet all other requirements of the County Design and Improvement Standards Manual.

Typical Design Standards

Design Standards Summary

The design standards for grading are presented in detail in Volume III of the County Design and Improvement Standards Manual. Provided below in summary form are the key standards common to most grading projects.

(Excerpts from Volume III of the County Design and Improvement Standards Manual)

Excavation – cut slope standards:

- **Slope steepness:** No excavation shall be made with a cut face steeper in slope than two horizontal to one vertical (2:1), exclusive of required terraces and roundings.
- **Terrace requirements:** For cut slopes up to 60 feet in height, terraces at least 8 feet (2.4 meters) in width shall be established at not more than 30-foot (9.1 meters) vertical intervals on all cut slopes to control surface drainage and debris except that where only one terrace is required, it shall be at midheight.
- **Terrace rounding:** Cut slopes shall be rounded into the existing terrain to produce a contoured transition from cut face to natural ground.

Fill Construction Standards:

- **Ground preparation for fill placement:** The natural ground surface shall be prepared to receive fill by the removal of all unsuitable material such as vegetation, top soil, landslide deposits or other unstable earth material and existing fill not installed in conformance with this ordinance.
- **Placement of fill:** Fills shall be constructed in layers. The loose thickness of each layer of fill material before compaction shall not exceed eight inches.
- **Slope steepness:** No fill shall be constructed with a face steeper in slope than two horizontal to one vertical (2:1), exclusive of required terraces.
- **Terrace requirements:** For fill slopes up to 60 feet in height, terraces at least 8 feet (2.4 meters) in width shall be established at not more than 30-foot (9.1 meters) vertical intervals on all fill slopes to control surface drainage and debris except that where only one terrace is required, it shall be at mid-height. Terraces shall slope a minimum of 5 percent gradient toward the hillside and be accessible for maintenance.

Drainage:

- **General requirements:** Drainage structures and facilities shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the standards included in this Volume, other applicable sections of the [Design and Improvement Standards Manual](#), the County [Drainage Manual](#), the California Building Code, [Natural Resource Conservation Service](#) guidelines, and other documents as determined by the Director.

- **Disposal requirements:** All drainage facilities shall be designed to convey surface runoff and subsurface waters to the nearest available street, storm drain, watercourse, detention basin or other disposal point adequate to accommodate the estimated flow from the proposed development as determined by the Director.

Codes & Exemptions

Applicability of permit requirement:

Pursuant to Section 15.14.130 of the County [Grading Ordinance](#), a grading permit is required for earth moving activities conducted on private property within the unincorporated area of El Dorado County in order to protect neighboring properties, public welfare and water quality of streams, rivers and lakes. In order for a permit to be granted, a proposed grading project must be consistent with

the County [General Plan](#), any applicable Specific Plan, the County [Grading Ordinance](#), the County [Design and Improvement Standards Manual](#), and the [Building Code currently in force](#).

Exemptions:

In accordance with Section 15.14.140 of the County Grading Ordinance, the following categories of grading projects are exempt from the requirement of obtaining a grading permit except where such grading would create a cut or fill that could potentially endanger any structure intended for human or animal occupancy, threaten the stability of any public road, or obstruct any watercourse or drainage conduit. Projects located in the Tahoe Basin are not eligible for the exemptions listed below pursuant to Section 15.14.150, "Tahoe Basin special restrictions".

Exempt projects shall comply with all other requirements of this Chapter, CEQA, the County Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP) and all other relevant codes and ordinances.

1. Single family dwellings and accessory structures that conform to all of the following design parameters:
 1. The volume of graded material is less than 250 cubic yards.
 2. All cuts are less than five feet in height.
 3. All fills are less than three feet in height.
 4. The area of soil disturbance is less than 10,000 square feet.
 5. No potentially unstable slopes or areas subject to erosion are created, as determined by the Director.
 6. Grading activities do not encroach into septic effluent disposal areas.
 7. Drainage is not directed into a septic effluent disposal area.
 8. Fills are not intended for support of structural improvements, including flatwork concrete, driveways, roads, and buildings.
 9. The grading activities would not alter previously placed erosion control materials or drainage facilities.
2. Multi-family residential or commercial/industrial projects that conform to all of the design parameters in Section 15.14.140.A above and for which a waiver of the requirement for a grading permit has been authorized by the Director.
3. Grading that conforms to all of the design parameters in Section 15.14.140.A above necessary to conduct soil, geotechnical, geological, or environmental studies by engineers, geologists, environmental health specialists or soil scientists in which the disturbed areas are subsequently restored to substantially the pre-existing condition.
4. Grading done under the supervision of a County agency for which the Board of Supervisors is the controlling body, or a public agency governed by an elected Board of Directors.
5. Excavation and placement of fill associated with the installation, maintenance, repair or replacement of facilities for the production, generation, storage, treatment, or transmission of water, wastewater (including recycled water), or electrical energy by a utility company

regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission, a public agency governed by an elected Board of Directors, an agency of the State of California or an agency of the United States of America.

6. Excavations for the foundation of a building or structure where the construction of such building or structure has been authorized by a Building Permit issued by the County.
7. Trenching and grading incidental to the construction or installation of county-approved underground pipelines, septic tank disposal fields, conduits, electrical or communication facilities, and drilling or excavation for approved wells or post holes.
8. Grading in accordance with plans and specifications incorporated into an approved surface mining permit, reclamation plan, or solid waste facilities permit.
9. Grading involving the ongoing operations of a vested mining facility that is conducted in conformance with an approved reclamation plan.
10. Maintenance of existing firebreaks and roads to keep the firebreak or road substantially in its original condition.
11. Routine cemetery excavations and fills.
12. Excavation within the public Right-of-Way under the authority of an Encroachment Permit issued by the County.
13. Installation of miscellaneous fills, such as landscape fills, that contains less than 50 cubic yards of material and conform to the design parameters listed in Section 15.14.140.A of this Chapter.
14. Construction of miscellaneous cuts that involve less than 50 cubic yards of excavation and conform to the design parameters listed in Section 15.14.140.A of this Chapter.
15. Agricultural grading activities that convert less than one acre of undisturbed vegetation to agricultural cropland.
16. Agricultural grading or other practices, including fuel reduction and fire protection, that do not substantially change the natural contour of the land and that use "best management practices" as recommended by the County Agricultural Commission and adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

Inspection

Construction schedule:

When required by the Director, a project schedule shall be provided that includes, as a minimum, the dates of:

1. Commencement of work.
2. Start and finish of rough grading.
3. Completion of drainage facilities.
4. Completion of work in any watercourse.

5. Completion of erosion and sediment control facilities.
6. Completion of hydro mulching and other drought-resistant landscaping. If rough grading is proposed between October 15th and May 1st, a more detailed schedule of grading activities and use of erosion and sediment control facilities may be required (final schedule to be provided after the grading permit is issued prior to the beginning of construction).

Regular Inspections:

The Director may inspect any work done under the authority of a permit granted pursuant to the Grading Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance (Chapter 15.14 of the County Code). No permittee shall be deemed to have complied with this Ordinance until a final inspection of the work has been completed by the County and the Director has determined in writing that the work has been completed in accordance with all requirements and conditions of the permit. The permittee shall provide adequate access to the site for inspection by the Director during the performance of all grading work and for a minimum period of one year after the final inspection of all improvements.

Rough Grade inspection must be completed before the foundation forms of the structure can be inspected. A rough grade inspection consists of the following:

1. Completion of all earth moving
2. Temporary erosion control measures have been placed per plan requirements are in place prior to the October 15 deadline if your project will extend into the winter months,
3. The driveway is constructed to within 2 inches of the approved grade.

Final Grade inspection must be done before obtaining occupancy of your structure. A final grade inspection consists of the following:

1. All permanent erosion control elements are in place,
2. Drainage facility construction is complete,
3. The driveway is surfaced as required by the plan and permit

Violation and abatement inspections:

Pursuant to Section D.1 below, the Director may require site inspections to investigate an alleged violation of the Grading Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance (Chapter 15.14 of the County Code), or inspections necessary to document the abatement of a verified violation of this Ordinance.

Special Inspections:

1. Criteria for special inspections: As a condition of any permit, or as part of the investigation or abatement of a violation of Chapter 15.14 of the County Code, the Director may require the permittee to provide periodic or continuous monitoring of the construction activities under the direction and responsibility of a Geotechnical Engineer, Civil Engineer or Engineering Geologist within their area of expertise and licensure. The permittee shall contract for such services and be responsible for the payment of all costs. Continuous or periodic observation and reporting by a Geotechnical Engineer, Civil Engineer and/or Engineering Geologist shall include, but not be limited to, the following situations:

1. During the preparation of a site or the placement of fills which exceed three feet in depth on slopes which exceed ten percent.
2. Fill placement for vehicular ways shall be continuously inspected when fills exceed ten feet in height.
3. During the preparation of a site for the placement of any fill and during the placement of such fill which is intended to support any building or structure.
4. During the installation of subsurface drainage facilities.

The use of a licensed professional for inspections or observations shall not preclude additional inspections by representatives of the County as deemed necessary by the Director.

2. Special Inspection reports: Reports filed by the Geotechnical Engineer, Certified Engineering Geologist or Civil Engineer regarding a special inspection shall state in writing a professional opinion, based on personal knowledge, that adequate inspection has been performed and the work accomplished during the period covered by the report has been completed in substantial accordance with the approved plans and specifications.

Progress reports:

When required by the Director, periodic progress reports as required by the Director shall be provided under the direction of the Project Engineer that address the following:

1. Laboratory test results
2. Slope stability
3. Placement of materials
4. Retaining wall installation
5. Installation of drainage facilities
6. Installation of utilities
7. Compliance with special permit or plan requirements.

8. Other technical issues identified by the Director.

Final technical reports:

Upon completion of grading work, the Director may require a final report(s) that addresses geotechnical, geologic, drainage or engineering issues and includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. A complete record of all field and laboratory tests including location and elevation of all field tests.
2. A professional opinion regarding slope stability, soil bearing capacity, and any other pertinent information.
3. Recommendations regarding foundation and roadway design, including soil bearing potential, and building restrictions or setbacks from the top or toe of slopes.
4. A declaration of professional opinion by the Geotechnical Engineer, Civil Engineer, or Engineering Geologist, in the format required by the Director, as to whether the work was done in substantial accordance with the recommendations contained in the accepted soil or geologic reports and in conformance with the approved plans and specifications, including but not limited to, line, grade and drainage design.

Other inspections required by the grading plan or the California Building Code:

1. Inspections on footings and reinforcing steel for freestanding retaining walls exceeding three feet above grade, prior to pouring concrete.
2. Storm drain or underground facilities must be inspected when: pipe is in place, prior to backfilling trenches; concrete structures have been formed, prior to placing concrete; and when all trenches have been backfilled and properly compacted.

Fees

Fee Schedule: The schedule of fees and costs shall be those established by duly adopted resolutions of the Board of Supervisors. For all fees relating to Building Services see [Resolution # 089-2021](#)

Timing of payment: As part of the application, the applicant shall provide to the County either an initial deposit of funds or a fixed fee as authorized by the adopted County fee ordinance. Fees and

deposits shall be provided to the Administrative Authority. The authorized methods of County cost recovery are described below:

- **Fixed fee cost recovery.** For projects eligible for the fixed fee cost recovery method, the fee shall be paid at the time of application. Fixed fees shall be allocated in equal amounts to cover the cost of plan check and the cost of construction inspection and be subject to the refund procedures specified in the applicable adopted fee ordinance or resolution.
- **Time and Materials cost recovery:** For projects that require time and materials reimbursement, an initial deposit of funds shall be provided based upon an engineer's estimate of project cost. This deposit shall constitute an estimate of the County's costs of permit processing. During permit processing, the applicant shall be periodically billed to cover ongoing County costs when a designated portion of the deposit, as determined by the Director, has been expended. Prior to permit issuance, or on an alternate schedule approved by the Director, any unpaid County costs associated with processing of the permit shall be paid by the applicant. In addition, the applicant shall provide a second deposit to cover the costs of construction inspection. During the inspection period, the applicant shall be periodically billed to cover ongoing County costs when a designated portion of the inspection deposit, as determined by the Director, has been expended. Any outstanding County costs at the time of final inspection shall be billed to the applicant. No additional permits shall be issued on a parcel with an unpaid bill for County costs. If there is a balance due the applicant at the time of final inspection approval, a refund will be processed within 60 days and funds will be forwarded to the owner of record.

Public agencies: The fee required of public agencies may be waived pursuant to the policy of the [County of El Dorado Board of Supervisors](#).

Public utilities: Public utilities may, at the option of the Director, make payment for the above charges as billed by the Director instead of by advance deposit as required above.