

Frequently Asked Questions



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES
860 N. Bush Street- Ukiah, California 95482
Telephone 707-234-6650
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Rebuilding After the 2017 Redwood Complex Fire

- 1. When a home is rebuilt, must it be built in compliance with current building codes?**
Yes. The structure must be constructed according to current State Building Codes. The State Code in effect now is the 2016 California Residential Code, which applies to one- and two-family dwellings and their accessory structures.
- 2. Can a house be built on an existing foundation?**
Applicants who wish to use the existing foundation systems must have a "suitability analysis" of the existing foundation performed by a registered civil or structural engineer. This analysis shall state that the engineer has visited the site and investigated the condition of the existing building elements. It shall also state that the remaining foundation is suitable for the support of the new structure, and that all under-slab utility systems (such as drain, waste, vent, water, mechanical, electrical, etc.) are suitable for continued use. Electrical conduits may remain but all under-slab electrical conductors must be replaced.

Please be advised that a compaction report to address re-compaction of the lot after foundation removal, if soil was disturbed to a depth greater than 12 inches, may be needed depending on new building elevations. A licensed geotechnical or civil engineer may be needed to prepare the compaction report
- 3. How is Mendocino County determining the square footage of structures that were on my property prior to the fire?**
When determining square footage, County staff will refer to building permit history records and Assessors records. The County does not retain building plan sets in most cases, but will have permit application forms and inspection records for most permitted structure built after 1980. The County will consider the square footages in other formal documents, such as insurance papers or old building plans on a case-by-case basis.
- 4. Is a Demolition Permit required for removal of a building or portions of a building that were damaged or destroyed by a fire?**
Not if a RIGHT OF ENTRY (ROE) has been submitted to County Department of Planning and Building Services and your property is on the list for cleanup by Army Corp of Engineers. If you chose to remove the debris yourself or through a contractor, a demolition permit is required pursuant to State Code (2016 California Residential Code, Section R105.1). CAL OSHA Standards for handling and disposal of the debris still apply. Demolition permits for residences are issued over-the-counter, without delay. Receipts for debris disposal and post clean-up soil analysis is needed before issuance of building permits. In addition, a permit may also be required from Environmental Health.
- 5. Is a Building Permit required to repair damage to a structure?**
Yes. A Permit is required for repairs and construction pursuant to State Code (2016 California Residential Code, Section R105.1). Review of repair permit applications will be expedited. Some situations may necessitate that a Registered Engineer evaluates the condition of the damaged home and provide engineered plans for the repair.

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6. How long do I have to rebuild my permanent residence?

There is no timeline on when you have to start rebuilding your home provided that your property is zoned to allow for a single family residence. If your home was located on an industrially zoned parcel, it was considered legal non-conforming and in these situations you will need to file the building permit application within one (1) year.

Once a building permit is issued, an inspection is needed a minimum of once a year in order to keep the permit from expiring. Each inspection needs to indicate that consistent progress toward completion is being made. A one-time 6-month extension can be granted by the Building Official for hardship situations. However, we encourage property owners to complete construction as quickly as practical and not wait to the last minute to call for the next inspection.

7. What documents are needed for a Building Permit?

All required plans and documents required for a rebuild permit are identified on the *Building Permit Handout*. The Building Permit Application Form can also be found on our website <http://www.co.mendocinocounty.org/government/planning-building-services/forms-and-handouts>. **Applications for a Building Permit required:**

1. Three Sets of plans,
2. Three copies of site plan
3. Two copies of engineering calculations (if applicable)
4. Two copies of California Energy Compliance (for conditional space)
5. One copy of CalFire 4290 Preliminary Clearance (if located in a State Responsibility Area)

A complete submittal and detailed building plans often translate into quicker review times. The site plan must be drawn to scale and include all improvements. Multiple departments and agencies will need to review these plans prior to permit issuance.

8. Once I have all building permit plans ready, how do I submit them?

Applications can be submitted at the Department of Planning and Building Services, 860 North Bush Street, Ukiah, between 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

9. What other agencies and fees might be involved in the Building Permit Process?

Mendocino County Department of Transportation - Encroachment & Road Impact fees is applicable
Mendocino County Department of Environmental Health – septic & well systems;
Local Water Company
Local and State Fire Agencies – SRA Title 14 Review;

10. Are fire sprinklers required for all new structures? Yes. Residential fire sprinkler systems are required as mandated by the 2016 California Residential Code Section R313. Accessory structures do not necessarily require sprinkler systems, with the exception of habitable residences or commercial buildings. Currently the State does not require sprinkler systems for Manufactured homes.

11. Do I need a licensed fire protection contractor to design and install the sprinkler system?

A homeowner can install the sprinkler system themselves. However, a fire sprinkler designer is required to design the system and prepare plans that will need to be signed off by the local Fire District. A licensed C-16 fire protection contractor can prepare plans and do the installation, but may require their client to use them for both the plans and installation.

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- 12. Can I live in a trailer or RV on my property while rebuilding a home?**
Yes, provided the County has issued a Temporary Administrative permit. Once the application is submitted, a permit will be issued if basic conditions can be met: such as an electrical permit for any necessary hookups; adequate water supply is available and accepted by the County, wastewater methods are approved by Environmental Health; the site is not at risk for landslides or debris flow; and, the placement of the temporary home does not preclude rebuilding.
- The Temporary Administrative Permit may be revoked if the terms and conditions of the permit have been violated. Otherwise the permit will expire on the expiration date stated within the permit or upon the completion of the reconstruction of your new home in which a Final Occupancy is issued by the Building Division (whichever occurs first).
- 13. Can I rebuild a garage or other accessory structure or continue an accessory use prior to rebuilding my home?**
The County can authorize reconstruction of an accessory structure. It will require a building permit as outlined in question #7.
- 14. Will my house plans for reconstruction be subject to Design Review?**
No. There is currently no county regulations to require Design Review within the area of the rebuild area.
- 15. Is a new owner required to meet all development standards, including setbacks?**
Yes. The same standards apply to existing and new lot owners.
- 16. Can I store materials in the County right-of-way?**
No.
- 17. Will I need a new encroachment permit with fee?**
It depends upon the condition and location of your current (past) driveway encroachment.
- 18. Do I need a Grading Permit to rebuild?**
If a homeowner wishes to reconstruct structures in approximately the pre-fire footprint, with minor additional grading then a grading permit in most cases will not be required.
- 19. Can I request a property tax reduction due to fire damage?**
Yes. In most cases your property has been reassessed for your loss and is being addressed by the County Assessor. There may be some cases where your property was missed or needs to be further evaluated. If that is the case, contact the County Assessor's Office, County Administration Center, 1440 Low Gap Rd., 707-234-6800.
- 20. If my home is on private well, do I need to have the well tested?**
Testing is not required, however, because the new home will require new plumbing, the well and plumbing should be disinfected and a water sample collected and analyzed for bacteriological quality prior to re-occupancy of the permanent building.
- 21. If my septic system or water well is damaged and I need to construct a new one, do setbacks apply for the new septic system or water well?**
Yes. Please contact the Environmental Health Division for set-back and distance requirements.

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- 24. In certain cases, structures cannot meet current setback requirements due to lot sizes or topography. Will the County still issue building permits?**
The County will make every effort to accommodate challenging lot set-back issues. However, structures must meet setbacks to the greatest extent practical. All fire safe building regulations (Title 14 and 4290), environment, and other health and safety ordinances and standards shall apply.
- 25. Will the County require evidence of a legal lot prior to issuance of a new building permit?**
Yes. Be aware that one legal lot may have several Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs), and that APNs do not establish legal lot status. Therefore, the legal lot lines & status must be confirmed prior to issuance of building permits. The County will accept evidence of a prior Building Permit.
- 26. Will building permits be issued for structures in a Floodway or Floodplain?**
Floodways are the drainage areas necessary for a 100-year flood (also indicated as “WW” on Zoning Map). No permits will be issued for structures within floodways. This is a health and safety issue and all structures must be located outside of the floodway. Regarding Floodplains (that area located on either side of the floodway, also indicated on the Zoning Map as “FF”), Yes. Habitable structures in the floodplain must conform to the flood control ordinance and have a building pad, or finished floor elevation, elevated above the 100-year flood level.
- 27. Can I rebuild a structure within a public or private road easement?**
No. All structures must be located outside of all road right-of-ways, regardless of whether the structure was located within the easement prior to the fire.
- 28. Must fire clearing and access width requirements be met for all rebuilds in High & Very High Fire Severity Zones?**
Yes. For lots that are an acre or more in size, set-backs of 30 feet from the property line for all structures is required as defensible space, in conformance with the State Natural Resources Code (Title 14, Chapter 7, Subchapter 2 SRA Fire Safe Regulations).
- 29. Are any permits required to clear up to 100 feet away (Defensible Space) from an existing residence?**
No. Clearing for fire protection purposes can be done within 100 feet of existing dwelling units without a permit, provided that clearing is not performed by an excavator or bulldozer. This does not authorize off-site clearing, although clearing in cooperation with your neighbors is encouraged. You are encouraged to always check with your local fire agency or Cal-Fire if you have any questions regarding tree removal.
- 30. If a building permit has been issued for a proposed building, is an additional clearing permit required to clear?**
No. Clearing and grading, (which are exempt from a grading permit if less than 50 cubic yards, cut less than 3 feet, and/or is less than 12,000 square feet of vegetation) DO NOT require an additional County grading permit provided they are incidental to the repair, alteration, or construction of a proposed structure with an approved building permit. The building permit authorizes the construction to begin and that includes clearing the building site. However, property owners must use caution regarding what is cleared and how the clearing is done. All disturbed earth will be required to have erosion control measures installed in accordance with County storm water pollution prevention standards (BMP's).

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31. Who is responsible for clearing the brush from around buildings?

The property owner.

32. Who enforces the regulations regarding clearance of fuel around buildings?

The Fire Agencies enforce weed abatement programs, requiring the clearance of flammable vegetation from around buildings.

Helpful Telephone Numbers

Mendocino County Agencies:

Planning and Building Services	707-234-6650
Environmental Health	707-234-6625
Department of Transportation	707-463-5363

Local Agencies:

Redwood Valley/Calpella Fire Dept.	707-485-8121
Redwood Valley County Water District	707-485-0679
Potter Valley Fire Dept.	707-743-1415
Potter Valley Irrigation District	707-743-1109

State Agencies:

Cal-Fire –Howard Forest	707-459-7414
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Department of Planning and Building Services – Building, Planning & Code Enforcement

www.mendocinocounty.org/pbs