

DPD

Director's Rule 33-2006

Applicant: City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development	Page 1 of 5	Supersedes: 3-93
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Subject: General Duties and Responsibilities of Geotechnical Engineers	Code and Section Reference: SMC 22.804 & 25.09; Seattle Building Code	
	Type of Rule: Code Interpretation	
	Ordinance Authority: SMC 3.06.040	
Index: Building/Grading - Technical	Approved (signature on file) Diane M. Sugimura, Director, DPD	Date 1/6/07

PURPOSE

The purpose of this rule is to define the Department's requirements for geotechnical engineers who are hired by permit applicants to analyze surface and subsurface conditions on a site.

Whenever development is proposed in a landslide-prone area as defined in the Regulations for Environmentally Critical Areas (Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 25.09) or when the Director determines that additional soils analysis is appropriate on a particular site, the applicant is required to submit a geotechnical report that evaluates the surface and subsurface conditions on the site. The Geotechnical Engineer hired to perform this work must comply with the duties and responsibilities included in this rule.

RULE

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

A Geotechnical Engineer who is licensed in the state of Washington shall prepare the Geotechnical Report, including the Site Evaluation Checklist, in accordance with generally accepted geotechnical practices. The Report must be signed and stamped by the Geotechnical Engineer.

The Geotechnical Engineer shall attend a Pre-construction Conference when requested by the Director. The Geotechnical Engineer is also responsible for developing a program for monitoring the site during construction to ensure compliance with the recommendations in the Geotechnical Report and conditions of the permit, and for performing such monitoring.

EXPLORATIONS

The Geotechnical Engineer shall conduct or direct all subsurface explorations. Explorations conducted in Environmentally Critical Areas shall meet the requirements of Director's Rule 20-90: Regulation and Enforcement of Investigative Field Work Performed in Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Shorelines or subsequent rules.

CONTENTS OF GEOTECHNICAL REPORT

The Geotechnical Report shall discuss all the items on the attached Site Evaluation Checklist and shall make specific recommendations concerning stability of the site. If any item in the checklist is inapplicable to a particular project, the Report shall provide sufficient information to demonstrate why the item is inapplicable.

The opinions and recommendations contained in the Report shall be supported by field observations and literature review which may include appropriate explorations, such as borings or test pits, and an analysis of soil characteristics conducted by or under the supervision of the engineer in accordance with the American Society of Testing and Materials or other applicable standards.

If required by the Director, evaluation involving significant geologic issues shall be reviewed and approved by a Washington State licensed Geologist.

The Geotechnical Engineer shall submit a statement that in the engineer's judgment all portions of the site which are disturbed or impacted by the proposed development will be stable or stabilized during construction and will continue to be stable after construction.

POTENTIALLY CONTAMINATED SOILS

In cases where the Director determines, or the Geotechnical Engineer recognizes, that a site has been used for manufacturing or industrial purposes or is otherwise potentially contaminated, the Geotechnical Report shall contain information regarding past treatment, disposal or storage of hazardous materials on the site. Analytical test results of site soils to determine concentration of pollutants shall be presented when required by the Director or when the Geotechnical Engineer encounters or suspects the presence of ground contamination by hazardous materials. The Geotechnical Engineer shall provide information concerning the level of contamination, direction of contamination migration, and the approximate extent of the plume. If contamination by hazardous materials is detected, the report shall indicate that the appropriate regulatory agencies have been contacted and provide appropriate discussion concerning reporting obligations of the property owner(s).

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A GEOTECHNICAL REPORT IN LANDSLIDE-PRONE AREAS

When a report is required for a site located within a landslide-prone area, it shall comply with the following additional submittal requirements.

1. An evaluation of the erosion potential on the site during and after construction shall be submitted. It shall include recommendations for mitigation including retention of vegetation buffers and a revegetation program (see SMC 25.09.320). The Geotechnical Engineer shall provide a statement identifying buffer areas at the top or toe of a slope based on geotechnical site constraints and the impacts of proposed construction methods on the stability of the slope. SMC 25.09.180C outlines minimum buffers required in steep slope areas.
2. The Geotechnical Engineer shall submit a statement in the soils report that the geotechnical elements of seismic design have been evaluated in accordance with the criteria and ground motions prescribed by the current version of the Seattle Building Code for new structures or ASCE-31 for existing buildings.

Slope stability analyses for landslide prone areas shall be evaluated for ground motions with a return period of at least 100 years (40% probability of exceedance in 50 years). Ground motions for landslide prone areas may be estimated from the most recent applicable version of the USGS National Seismic Hazard Maps (modified for soil conditions using amplification factors from the SBC), site-specific studies, or a peak ground acceleration of 0.2g if no other studies are available. For Site Class E and F, ground motion estimates shall be made using the USGS maps or site-specific studies.

The plan set for the project shall be reviewed by the Geotechnical Engineer for consistency with these design criteria.

3. The Geotechnical Engineer shall make a recommendation as to which portion of the site is the most naturally stable and the preferred location of the structure. The limits of the area of grading activity shall be identified in the recommendations.
4. In general, no excavation will be permitted in landslide-prone areas during the typically wet winter months. When excavation is proposed, including the maintenance of open temporary slopes, between November 1 and March 31, technical analysis shall be provided to assure that no environmental harm or safety issues would result. The technical analysis shall be submitted for approval by the Director and shall consist of plans showing mitigation techniques and a letter from the Geotechnical Engineer.

Reports prepared for Master Use Permit applications and projects in landslide-prone areas shall address comments received from the public and governmental agencies concerning the geotechnical aspects of the proposed development.

The Director may require supplements or amendments to the report when needed to develop a reasonably comprehensive understanding of the soil conditions on the site.

PRE-CONSTRUCTION CONFERENCE

The Geotechnical Engineer shall attend a Pre-construction Conference with the applicant, the Lead Design Professional, the Contractor, and Department Representatives when requested by the Director. The conference may include discussions of: Excavation plans, phasing of work, monitoring requirements, geotechnical recommendations, instability risks, weather considerations, disposal of excavation soils, surface and groundwater conditions, fill materials, erosion control, and other matters the Director deems relevant.

CONSTRUCTION MONITORING

The Geotechnical Engineer shall monitor the site and provide special inspection as required by the Director during the construction phase to ensure compliance with the recommendations of

the Geotechnical Report, particularly site excavation, construction scheduling, shoring, soil compaction, erosion control and any other geotechnical aspects of the construction. The construction monitoring shall meet the general requirements for special inspections as found in Director's Rule 23-87 or subsequent rules.

Unless otherwise approved by the Director, the specific recommendations contained in the Geotechnical Report shall be implemented by the owner. The Geotechnical Engineer shall provide written reports on the progress of the construction to the Director at such timely intervals as shall be specified by the Director. Omissions or deviations from the approved plans and specifications shall be immediately reported to the Geotechnical Section of DPD. The final construction monitoring report shall contain a statement from the Geotechnical Engineer that, based upon his or her professional opinion, site observations and testing during the monitoring of the construction, the completed development substantially complies with the recommendations in the Geotechnical Report and with DPD-approved plans and all permit requirements. The final report shall be stamped by the Geotechnical Engineer. Occupancy of the project will not be approved until the report has been reviewed and accepted by the Director.

RETENTION OF A NEW GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER

If a new Geotechnical Engineer is retained by the owner, the new engineer shall, in a letter to the Director, express his or her agreement or disagreement with the recommendations of the original Geotechnical Engineer and state whether existing plans and specifications conform to his or her recommendations. Further recommendations signed and sealed by the new Geotechnical Engineer, as well as additional exploration, analysis and testing, shall be provided should there be additions or exceptions to the original recommendations.

SITE EVALUATION CHECKLIST

The following are general report guidelines. These guidelines are not intended to be all inclusive. It is the responsibility of the Geotechnical Consultant to address all factors which in their opinion are relevant to the site. The checklist shall be completed and included as part of the Geotechnical Report. All items listed below must be addressed in the report. Information shall be provided for those items which are not relevant to a given site to demonstrate why the items are not applicable.

I. PROJECT INFORMATION

- A. Site Address
- B. DPD Project Number

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- A. Description of proposed structural and site improvements
- B. Floor and foundation grades
- C. Anticipated excavation depths. If the excavation will extend below a 45 degree projection from the edge of the right-of-way, the report should indicate that a permit will be required from the Seattle Engineering Department.

III. SITE FEATURES

- A. Vicinity map
- B. Site plan showing existing and proposed structures and site improvements, property lines, and existing contour lines if available
- C. Surface conditions, including adjacent properties, structures, and right-of-ways
- D. Description of existing sewer drainage facilities on or adjacent to site

IV. SITE RECONNAISSANCE

- A. Surface soil reconnaissance
- B. Preliminary geologic hazard assessment
- C. Review of available literature, geologic maps
- D. Landslide history, including review of city files and the Seattle Landslide Study

V. SUBSURFACE CONDITIONS

- A. Subsurface conditions and site topographic features
- B. Exploration logs
- C. Test results
- D. Geologic profile and site development sections
- E. Groundwater Evaluation

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- A. Conceptual siting of structures and general recommendations
- B. Stability Assessment, including existing condition, construction phase, and post-construction phase
- C. Grading and earthwork, including site preparation, compaction requirements, fill specifications, and sequencing of earthwork operations
- D. Foundation types, allowable bearing pressures, lateral earth pressures, temporary excavation slopes, drainage criteria, shoring, etc.
- E. For projects in landslide-prone critical areas, assessment of slope stability using ground motions with a return period of at least 100 years,
- F. Evaluation of erosion potential and appropriate mitigation measures

VII. RISK EVALUATION STATEMENTS

- A. In landslide-prone critical areas, the following will be required with all permit applications:

A statement that the plans and specifications submitted to DPD have been reviewed and conform to the recommendations of the analysis and report and, provided that those conditions and recommendations are satisfied during the construction and use, the areas disturbed by construction will be stabilized and remain stable and will not increase the potential for soil movement; and the risk of damage to the proposed development and from the development to adjacent properties from soil instability will be minimal.
- B. In other areas designated by the Director as having high risk potential, the following shall be submitted:

A statement that the plans and specifications submitted to DPD have been reviewed and conform to the recommendations of the analysis and report, and provided that the conditions and recommendations are satisfied, the construction and development will not increase the potential for soil movement; and the risk of damage to the proposed development and from the development to adjacent properties from soil instability will be minimal.
- C. In Liquefaction-prone critical areas, the statement required under section B will be required when the Director determines the risks are still sufficiently high after consideration of any proposed mitigation.