



## **ELEVATION CERTIFICATES IN SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS**

Prior to 1968 there were no government programs to ease the financial burden on most flood victims and insurance companies did not offer flood insurance for structures in flood prone areas. Congress established the National Flood Insurance program to address the protection of communities from flood damage through flood plain management and to provide the public with flood insurance. December 2, 1980 the County of Los Angeles joined as a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). As part of this program, the County agreed to comply with Section 60.3 of Title 44 (FEMA regulations) of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) which specifies minimum requirements for structures in areas designated as Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). One method of mitigation in these SFHA is to elevate structures above the Flood Hazard. An Elevation Certificate is the document required by FEMA to ensure compliance with this requirement. The information provided on the Elevation Certificate is used by the insurer to evaluate the level of protection provided and to determine flood insurance rates per the FEMA regulations in flood zones A1-A30, AE, AH, A, VE, V1-V30, V, AR, AR/A, AR/AE, AR/A1-A30, AR/AH, and AR/AO.

Section 110.1.1 of the Los Angeles County Building Code governs construction in streams, flood plains, floodways, and flood hazard areas. Additionally, Section 110.1.1 of the Building Code references Section 60.3 of Title 44 of the CFR and requires all projects to comply with FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program.

Periodic audits, entitled Community Assistance Visits (CAVs), are conducted by FEMA. During these visits FEMA requires detailed information for structures constructed in SFHAs. This information is used to evaluate the level of compliance with the regulations and to provide community ratings. Community ratings are in turn used to establish the flood insurance rates for citizens of each community. Participation in the FEMA community rating system and complying with these regulations results in the reduction of flood insurance premiums for the citizens of Los Angeles County.

### **Regional Drainage and Grading Engineer (RDGE) and Inspectors Responsibilities:**

The Regional Drainage and Grading Engineers' (RDGE) are responsible for reviewing all building and grading plans to ensure compliance with the NFIP regulations in their jurisdiction. In addition, the RDGE is responsible for maintaining permanent records for all approved projects where Elevation Certificates are required.

The RDGE reviews Drainage and Grading Plans to determine if a proposed structure is located within the SFHA. For such structures, the RDGE shall require that the flood protection measures are reflected on Building and Drainage plans before the building permit is issued. The RDGE may require a drainage study by a Civil Engineer to determine the level of protection needed and to verify that adjacent properties are not adversely impacted. The drainage study shall examine the

impact of flood forces on the structure and propose necessary measures to alleviate the potential hazard. When an Elevation Certificate for the project is required, the following guidelines shall be observed:

1. The RDGE shall complete a drainage and/or grading plan review with specific requirements based on the type of flood zone and the proposed use of the structure, i.e., finished floor elevation, flood venting requirements, special foundation design. He/she shall indicate on the review sheet that an ELEVATION CERTIFICATE IS REQUIRED and stamp the plans as shown below.



2. Once the provisions for flood protection have been determined by the RDGE, the RDGE shall verify with the Building Plan checker that the requirements for flood protection are also depicted on the building/structural plans. Requirements for an Elevation Certificate shall also be stamped in Red as shown above on the Building and Drainage or Grading Plans Title Sheet and the foundation and pertinent detail sheets. In addition, the requirement for an elevation certificate shall be entered into the “Drainage and Grading” Database. On grading projects where an elevation certificate is needed, the RDGE shall also indicate an Elevation Certificate is required in the pre-grade meeting check list.
3. The RDGE shall place an Administrative Hold in DAPTS on the Building permit to notify the Permit Technicians of the Elevation Certificate requirement. The “hold” shall indicate the following, “This project requires an Elevation Certificate. Building Plans should be stamped in red on the Title Page and the sheet containing the foundation details to indicate an Elevation Certificate is required. If the building plan shows the Elevation Certificate stamp, then it is ok to issue the permit. If the plan is **not stamped**, then the RDGE shall be notified for approval before issuing building permit.

Inspection Procedures

4. During the foundation inspection, before pouring concrete, the inspector shall notify the contractor/owner in a correction notice “NOT TO PROCEED WITH THE POURING OF FOOTING or SLAB” until an Interim Elevation Letter (See Interim Elevation Letter, Attachment A), prepared by a Civil Engineer or a Licensed Surveyor is submitted and verified.



5. Upon the receipt of the Interim Elevation Letter the inspector shall verify the elevation of the proposed finish floor indicated matches the finished floor elevation stamped on the plan. DO NOT ALLOW THE APPLICANT TO PROCEED WITH POURING UNTIL VERIFIED. Inspectors should contact the RDGE if they have questions or concerns. The Interim Elevation Letter should be kept in the job folder.
6. Prior to Final Inspection, the Building Inspector shall require that a Final Elevation Certificate is submitted and approved by the RDGE.

The RDGE shall review the Elevation Certificate and verify that the conditions of approval have been met and reflected on the form. If the form is incomplete or incorrect, the RDGE shall forward the unapproved Elevation Certificate to the applicant or engineer for corrections.

Upon the approval of the Elevation Certificate, the RDGE shall forward a copy of the final Elevation Certificate to the Building Inspector. The Building Inspector shall retain the approved copy with the permit package to be retained in the job file.

In addition, the RDGE shall also scan the Elevation Certificate and attachments and save it in the Grading and Drainage database.

Note: The RDGE is responsible for the retention and maintenance of the Elevation Certificates, Photos and all supporting documents. These files are periodically audited by FEMA and/or Watershed Management staff. The RDGE shall verify the most current Elevation Certificate is used by the applicant by visiting [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).

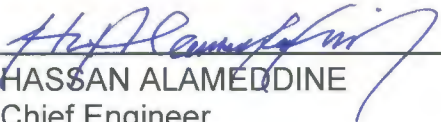
Supersedes AM 50.05 Dated 4/09/1992

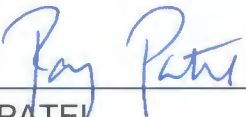
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(ATTACHMENT A – SAMPLE INTERIM ELEVATION LETTER)

ELEVATION CERTIFICATE – INTERIM LETTER

I \_\_\_\_\_ as Civil Engineer/Surveyor for the project located at \_\_\_\_\_ (Site Address), \_\_\_\_\_ (Building Plan Check Number) have inspected the forms and the proposed final elevation of the finished floor for compliance with the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program and have verified that the proposed finished floor elevation, flood venting and foundation design requirements are in compliance with the approved plans.

Current conditions are as follows:

Proposed Finished floor elevation is \_\_\_\_\_ feet based on project Bench Mark.

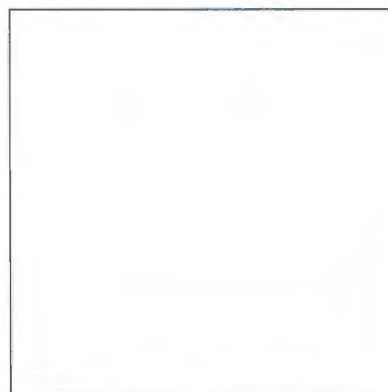
Or:

Proposed Finished floor is \_\_\_\_\_ feet above:  natural grade  sea level  project bench mark

Upon the completion of the project, a completed Elevation Certificate in compliance with the current Federal Flood Plain Management Regulations defined in Title 44, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 60.3 shall be submitted. This includes verification of mechanical and electrical equipment as well as required photos.

Current Elevation Certificate Forms can be obtained from FEMA’s website: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

Engineers/Surveyors signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Engineers/Surveyors Seal