

This handout is to clarify when a building permit is required for the construction of a retaining wall.

DEFINITIONS:

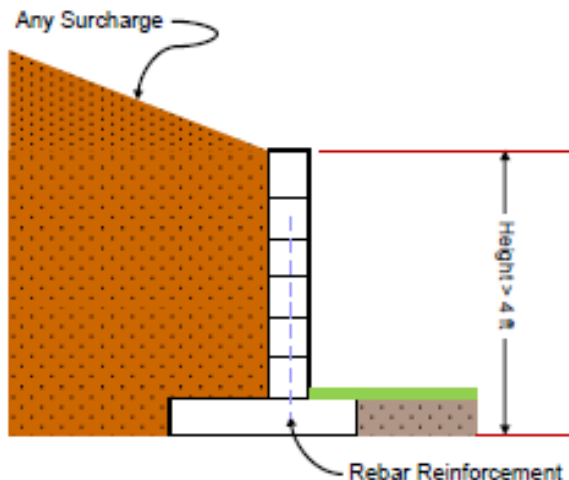
Retaining Wall: A wall designed to resist earth and/or fluid pressure, including any surcharge in accordance with acceptable engineering practices.

Surcharge: The vertical load imposed on retained soil that may impose a lateral force in addition to lateral earth pressure of retained soil. For example: Sloping retained soil; structure footings supported by the retained soil; adjacent vehicle loads supported by retained soil.

Retaining Wall Height: The vertical distance measured from the bottom of the footing to the finish grade at the top of the wall (i.e. upper grade). This is the height reflected in the 2019 California Building Code Sec. 105.2 item 4 and it includes the wall and depth of the footing below grade.

Exposed Wall Height: The vertical distance measured from the finish grade at the bottom of the wall (i.e. lower soil grade) to the foundation grade at the top of the wall (i.e. upper soil grade). The height does not include the wall depth of footing below grade.

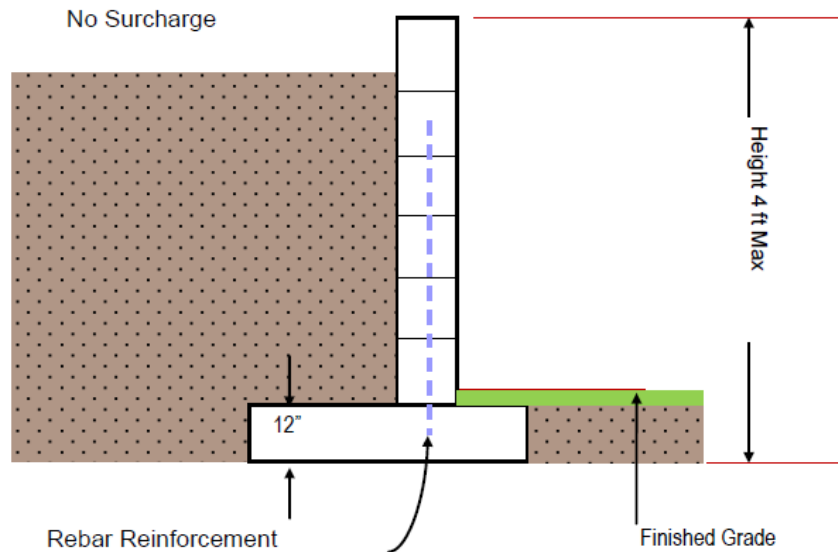
WHEN IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?



A permit is required if:

- The total wall height is greater than 4' feet measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the retaining wall.
- or,
- There is a back-slope adjacent to the retaining wall that has a 2:1 or greater slope.
- or,
- A surcharge load conditions exist as defined (buildings, roads, vehicle loads, etc...)
- or,
- Solid fences are attached (or directly adjacent) to the proposed retaining wall.

WHEN IS A PERMIT NOT REQUIRED?



A construction permit is NOT required for retaining walls which:

- Do not exceed 4' feet in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall.
- Do not retain a surcharge as defined on the opposite page. Must be a level backfill only.
- Do not impound Class I, II or III liquids.