

Grayson County Building Department
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Agricultural Buildings

Farm buildings and structures may be exempt from the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC). In order to qualify for this exemption, the structure must be a specific purpose which is directly related to an operating farm. The Code of Virginia §36-97 and Section 102.3.6 of the 2012 edition of the USBC defines a farm building/structure as follows:

NOTE: Exemptions for farm buildings or structures do not apply when the proposed structure is located within a FEMA designated Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).

Farm Building or Structure: A building or structure not used for residential purposes, located on property where farming operations take place, and used primarily for any of the following uses or combination thereof:

1. Storage, handling, production, display, sampling or sale of agricultural, horticultural, floricultural or silvicultural products produced on the farm.
2. Sheltering, raising, handling, processing or sale of agricultural animals or agricultural animal products.
3. Business or office uses relating to the farm operations.
4. Use of farm machinery or equipment or maintenance or storage of vehicles, machinery or equipment on the farm.
5. Storage or use of supplies and materials used on the farm.
6. Implementation of best management practices associated with farm operations.

In addition, certain land disturbing activities are also exempt from the requirements of the Grayson County Erosion & Sediment Control Ordinance. Included are those agricultural activities detailed below of §10.1-560 of the Code of Virginia.

1. Minor land-disturbing activities such as home gardens and individual home landscaping, repairs and maintenance work;
2. Individual service connections;
3. Installation, maintenance, or repair of any underground public utility lines when such activity occurs on an existing hard surface road, street or sidewalk provided the land-disturbing activity is confined to the area of the road, street or sidewalk that is hard surfaced;

4. Septic tank lines or drainage fields unless included in an overall plan for land disturbing activity relating to construction of the building to be served by the septic tank system;
5. Surface or deep mining activities authorized under a permit issued by the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy;
6. Exploration or drilling for oil and gas including the well site, roads, feeder lines and off-site disposal areas;
7. Tilling, planting or harvesting of agricultural, horticultural, or forest crops, or livestock feedlot operations; including engineering operations as follows: construction of terraces, terrace outlets, check dams, desilting basins, dikes, ponds, ditches, strip cropping, lister furrowing, contour cultivating, contour furrowing, land drainage and land irrigation; however, this exception shall not apply to harvesting of forest crops unless the area on which harvesting occurs is reforested artificially or naturally in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 11 (§ 10.1-1100 et seq.) of this title or is converted to bona fide agricultural or improved pasture use as described in subsection B of §10.1-1163;
8. Repair or rebuilding of the tracks, right-of-way, bridges, communications facilities and other related structures and facilities of a railroad company;
9. Agricultural engineering operations including but not limited to the construction of terraces, terrace outlets, check dams, desilting basins, dikes, ponds not required to comply with the provisions of the Dam Safety Act, Article 2 (§ 10.1-604 et seq.) of Chapter 6 of this title, ditches, strip cropping, lister furrowing, contour cultivating, contour furrowing, land drainage and land irrigations;
10. Disturbed land areas of less than 10,000 square feet in size; however, the governing body of the program authority may reduce this exception to a smaller area of disturbed land or qualify the conditions under which this exception shall apply;
11. Installation of fence and sign posts or telephone and electrical poles and other kinds of posts or poles;
12. Shoreline erosion control projects on tidal water when all of the land disturbing activities are within the regulatory authority of an approved by local wetlands boards, the Marine Resources Commission or the United States Army Core of Engineers; however, any associated land that is disturbed outside the exempted area shall remain subject to this article and the regulations adopted pursuant thereto; and
13. Emergency work to protect life, limb or property, and emergency repairs; however, if the land-disturbing activity would have required an approved erosion and sediment control plan, if the activity were not an emergency, **then the land area disturbed shall be shaped and stabilized in accordance with the requirements of the plan approving authority.**

NOTE: If the proposed land disturbance includes the placement of fill on agricultural land, the owner should be aware of the following:

- An Off-Site Soil Tracking Form must be submitted;
- Placing fill in low lying wet areas (wetlands) may result in the loss of benefits from the USDA, and the assessment of civil penalties from the Army Core of Engineers and Virginia DEQ;
- An Erosion and Sediment Plan may be required;

The New River Soil and Water Conservation District provides technical assistance for land owners who wish to place fill on agricultural lands. You may reach the agency at 276-236-7191.

However, before a building can begin, an agricultural affidavit must be submitted to the building department for review. Although agricultural structures may be exempt you must still meet the requirements of the Grayson County Zoning Ordinance, these requirements can be found in the Planning & Community Development portion of this website.

**** Permit applications are available on the Building Department webpage and can be located under Agricultural Permit Applications***