

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE
COUNTY FLOOD DAMAGE PREVENTION
ORDINANCE TO REFLECT COMMUNITY
RATING SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

Meeting Date: March 4, 2026 (01)

ORDINANCE NO. 10983(New Series)

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE COUNTY FLOOD DAMAGE PREVENTION
ORDINANCE TO REFLECT COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

The Board of Supervisors of the County of San Diego ordains as follows:

Section 1: The Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, San Diego County Code of Regulatory Ordinances (“County Code”) section 811.101 *et seq.* (“Ordinance”) implements federal regulations and requirements for the County of San Diego to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (“NFIP”) and the Community Rating System (“CRS”). As a condition of the County’s participation in these programs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) periodically completes compliance reviews of the Ordinance. Following a review in May 2025, FEMA recommended that to better reflect CRS requirements portions of the Ordinance be amended to make it clear that architects may only certify structural elevations when the certification is based on a survey from a licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer and that the elevation requirements for manufactured homes be further clarified to specify the 1 foot freeboard requirement. This Ordinance amendment implements FEMA recommended changes.

Section 2: Section 811.501 of the County Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

SEC. 811.501. STANDARDS OF CONSTRUCTION.

In all areas of special flood hazard the following standards are required:

(a) Anchoring.

All new construction, substantial improvements, and development shall be anchored to prevent flotation, collapse or lateral movement of the structure resulting from hydrodynamic and hydrostatic loads (including the effects of buoyancy) from the base flood.

(b) Construction materials and methods. All new construction, substantial improvements and structures placed in an area of special flood hazard shall be constructed:

(1) With materials and utility equipment that are resistant to flood damage for all areas below the base flood elevation or depth.

(2) Using materials and practices that minimize flood damage.

(3) With electrical, heating, ventilation, plumbing and air conditioning equipment and other service facilities that are designed and located so as to prevent water from entering or accumulating within the components during base flood conditions of flooding.

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(4) With adequate drainage paths to guide flood waters around and away from proposed structures and any existing structures that may be adversely impacted by a change in drainage paths.

(c) Elevation and flood proofing.

(1) Residential construction in special flood hazard areas outside an alluvial fan. All new construction, substantial improvements and placement of a residential structure within a special flood hazard area located outside an alluvial fan shall have the lowest floor, including basement, mechanical and utility equipment, and ductwork, but excluding garages used solely for parking or storing vehicles, access to or from the residence or storage in a manner that prevents stored objects from being carried away in a flood, elevated 1 foot above the base flood elevation. The elevation shall be certified on a FEMA elevation certificate by a registered civil engineer or licensed land surveyor, an architect may certify structural elevations only when the certification relies on survey data prepared by a licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer; and the design and method of construction of any portion of a garage allowable below base flood elevation certified by a registered civil engineer, or architect as meeting these standards and standards imposed by the National Flood Insurance Program, and verified by the County building inspector. Such certification and verification shall be provided to the Floodplain Administrator.

(2) Construction in alluvial fans. New construction, substantial improvement and placement of any structure in Zone AO or within the alluvial fan boundaries shown on the Borrego Valley alluvial fans map or FIRM, shall have the lowest floor, including basement, mechanical and utility equipment, and ductwork, elevated at least 1 foot above the highest adjacent grade at least as high as the FIRM's depth number. The elevation shall be certified on a FEMA elevation certificate by a registered civil engineer or licensed land surveyor, an architect may certify structural elevations only when the certification relies on survey data prepared by a licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer; and verified by the County building inspector. Such certification and verification shall be provided to the Floodplain Administrator.

(3) Nonresidential construction in special flood hazard areas outside an alluvial fan. All new construction, substantial improvements and placement of a nonresidential structure shall either be elevated in conformance with the standards applicable to residential construction or conform to the following standards:

A. Be flood proofed at least 1 foot above the base flood elevation. The structure (including attendant utility and sanitary facilities) below 1 foot above the base flood elevation must be watertight with walls substantially impermeable to the passage of water;

B. Have structural components capable of resisting hydrostatic and hydrodynamic loads and effects of buoyancy; and

C. A registered civil engineer or architect shall develop and/or review structural design, specifications, and plans for the construction, and shall certify that the design and methods of construction are in accordance with accepted standards of practice for meeting these standards and standards imposed by the National Flood Insurance Program and verified by the County building inspector. Floodproofing Certificate for Non-Residential Structures shall be used. Such certification and verification shall be provided to the Floodplain Administrator.

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(4) Structures elevated on piers, columns, or stem walls to allow unobstructed flow of the base flood shall have the bottom of the lowest horizontal structural member elevated above the base flood elevation or base flood depth.

(d) General requirements applicable to alluvial fans. All new construction, substantial improvements and structures placed in Zone AO or within the alluvial fan boundaries shown on the Borrego Valley alluvial fans map or FIRM, shall meet the following minimum requirements:

(1) All structures shall be raised on piers, columns or stem walls oriented in the direction of flow, so as not to impede the flow of floodwater and debris, and have the lowest horizontal structural member elevated above the highest adjacent grade to at least as high as the depth number as shown on the effective FEMA FIRM map.

(2) The use of fill to elevate a structure may be allowed for structures located on a lot greater than one acre but less than five acres and not associated with a new development of greater than 50 lots and meeting all of the following:

A. For one- and two-family dwelling units and accessory structures, elevated on fill with the lowest floor or slab a minimum one foot above the base flood depth as shown on the effective FEMA FIRM Map. For all other structures, elevated on fill with the lowest floor or slab a minimum of two feet above the base flood depth as shown on the effective FEMA FIRM Map.

B. Structure and associated fill do not divert floodwater flow or debris in a manner negatively affecting other lots, based on a site-specific review.

(3) No improvement shall cause a major disruption to the natural alluvial fan process.

(4) Foundations of structures shall be protected from erosion.

(5) The difference in elevation between the lowest floor, including basement, mechanical and utility equipment, and ductwork and the base flood depth shall be certified on a FEMA elevation certificate by a registered civil engineer or licensed land surveyor, an architect may certify structural elevations only when the certification relies on survey data prepared by a licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer, and verified by the County building inspector. Such certification and verification shall be provided to the Floodplain Administrator.

(6) The criteria set forth in this Chapter with regard to alluvial fans apply to alluvial aprons. Depths of one foot and velocity of 8 feet/second are to be used unless more specific information is available or the Floodplain Administrator determines a different standard should be used.

(7) Projects which impact alluvial washes must carry the flow from the wash around any structure or obstruction and redistribute the flow without adversely affecting adjoining property.

(8) Projects which impact fan terminus alluvial washes shall be designed so that any obstruction to flow will not cause a cumulative increase in the base flood depth of more than 0.5 feet.

(9) A preliminary approval of the flood insurance rating shall be obtained before construction approval.

(e) Flood Openings.

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All new construction, substantial improvements, and placement of any fully enclosed nonresidential structure or garage that is usable solely for parking of vehicles, access to or from the structure or storage in a manner that prevents stored objects from being carried away in a flood, and which are subject to flooding, shall be designed to automatically equalize hydrostatic flood forces on exterior walls by allowing for the entry and exit of floodwaters. Designs for meeting this requirement must be certified on a FEMA elevation certificate by either a registered civil engineer, or architect as meeting or exceeding the stricter of the requirements imposed pursuant to the National Flood Insurance Program or this Ordinance as follows:

- (1) Have a minimum of two openings on different sides having a total net area of not less than one square inch for every square foot of enclosed area subject to flooding;
- (2) The bottom of all openings shall be no higher than one foot above grade;
- (3) Openings may be equipped with screens, louvers, valves or other coverings or devices provided that they permit the automatic entry and exit of floodwater; and
- (4) Buildings with more than one enclosed area must have openings on exterior walls for each area to allow flood water to directly enter.

Section 3: Section 811.504 of the County Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

SEC. 811.504. STANDARDS FOR MANUFACTURED HOMES.

(a) All manufactured homes that are placed or substantially improved, on sites located: (1) outside of a manufactured home park or subdivision; (2) in a new manufactured home park or subdivision; (3) in an expansion to an existing manufactured home park or subdivision; or (4) in an existing manufactured home park or subdivision upon which a manufactured home has incurred "substantial damage" as the result of a flood, shall:

(1) Within Zones A, AH, and AE on the community's Flood Insurance Rate Map, be elevated on a permanent foundation such that the lowest floor of the manufactured home is at least one foot above the base flood elevation and be securely fastened to an adequately anchored foundation system to resist flotation, collapse, and lateral movement.

(b) All manufactured homes to be placed or substantially improved on sites in an existing manufactured home park or subdivision within Zones A, AH, and AE on a community's Flood Insurance Rate Map that are not subject to provisions of Section 5.4.A will be securely fastened to an adequately anchored foundation system to resist flotation, collapse and lateral movement, and be elevated so that either the:

(1) Lowest floor of the manufactured home is at least one-foot above the base flood elevation; or

(2) Manufactured home chassis is supported by reinforced piers or other foundation elements of at least equivalent strength that are no less than 36 inches (24 inches plus one-foot freeboard) in height above the highest adjacent grade where no BFE or County-provided water surface elevation

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is available. Floodplain Administrator may require additional elevation above this minimum based on site-specific conditions.

(c) The elevation of the lowest floor shall be certified by a registered civil engineer or licensed land surveyor, an architect may certify structural elevations only when the certification relies on survey data prepared by a licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer, and verified by the County building inspector to be properly elevated. Such certification and verification shall be provided to the Floodplain Administrator.

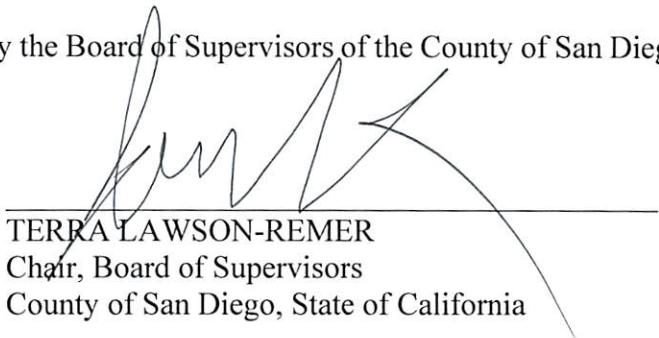
Section 4: This ordinance shall take effect and be in force thirty (30) days after the date of its passage, and before the expiration of fifteen (15) days after its passage, a summary shall be published once with the names of the members voting for and against the same in a newspaper of general circulation published in the County of San Diego.

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY

Damon M. Brown, County Counsel

By: Thomas Bosworth, Supervising Deputy County Counsel

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Diego on this 4th day of March 2026.


TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of San Diego, State of California

The above Ordinance was adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Aguirre, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

ATTEST my hand and the seal of the Board of Supervisors on this 4th day of March 2026.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By 
Janely Valdivia, Deputy



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