



## **BROCHURE # 35** **GEO – HAZARDS**

### **A KITSAP COUNTY CRITICAL AREAS ORDINANCE FACT SHEET**

The Kitsap County Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) regulates development affecting wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, streams, aquifer recharge areas, and frequently flooded and geologically hazardous areas. This CAO fact sheet is one in a series which describes the above types of environmentally critical areas protected by Kitsap County under the *Critical Areas Ordinance*, Title 19, Kitsap County Code. This has been provided to you as general information and is not intended as a substitute for the actual codes and regulations. For more information, contact the Kitsap County Department of Community Development at (360) 337-5777 or visit our website at [www.kitsapgov.com/dcd](http://www.kitsapgov.com/dcd)

#### **What Is a Geologically Hazardous Area?**

Geologically hazardous areas are places highly susceptible to erosion, landslides, earthquakes or other geological events. Their designations are dependent upon slope, soil type, geological material and hydrological conditions. In Kitsap County, the most hazardous of these areas are typically found along the marine shoreline, stream valleys, and steep slopes.

In many cases, these areas may be extremely desirable for development because of scenic views or water and beach access, but their development may endanger people, property and surface water resources.

#### **Does my property contain a geo-hazard?**

To assist you in determining if your property contains a geologically hazardous area, you may contact the Kitsap County Department of Community Development. They can provide you with maps of geologically hazardous areas.

Since not all geo-hazards have been identified on County resource maps, these maps should be used as a general guide for property owners.

Your property still may contain a geo-hazard that requires protection under the Kitsap County CAO. In this case, a qualified geologist may need to visit your property to make the appropriate recommendations.

For a consultant list, contact Kitsap County DCD.

#### **Classification and Designation**

In Kitsap County, three types of geologically hazardous areas exist:

- Landslide hazard areas
- Erosion hazard areas
- Seismic hazard areas

Because of the overlap that exists between landslide, erosion and seismic hazard areas, the hazard areas have been combined into two categories— areas of “high” geologic hazard and areas of “moderate” geologic hazard.

#### **Areas of high geologic hazard include:**

- Areas of with slopes greater than or equal to 30%, with landslides identified as Unstable (U), Unstable Old Slide (UOS), or Unstable Recent Slide (URS)

Areas with slopes greater than 30% deemed by a qualified geologist to meet the criteria of U, UOS, or URS

#### **Areas of moderate geologic hazard include:**

- Landslide areas identified as U, UOS, or URS with slopes less than 30%, or areas found by a qualified geologist to meet the criteria for landslide areas with slopes less than 30%
- Slopes identified as Intermediate (I) or areas found by a qualified geologist to meet the criteria of I
- Slopes 15% or greater with soils classified by the Soil Conservation Service as “Highly Erodible” or “Potentially Highly Erodible”
- Slopes 15% or greater with springs or groundwater seepage not previously identified
- Areas subject to liquefaction from earthquakes, such as hydric soils.

## Buffer and Building Setbacks

Most critical areas have a buffer of land which protects them from human activity. No clearing or grading is allowed within this buffer or critical area.

A minimum native vegetation buffer from the toe of a slope to 25 feet beyond the top of the slope is required for geologically hazardous areas in Kitsap County.

In areas of high geologic hazard, the minimum building and impervious setback from the top of a slope must be equal to one and one-third times the vertical height of the slope, or 15 feet beyond the non-clearing buffer, whichever is greater.

In areas of moderate geological hazard the setbacks may be reduced to 40 feet (15 feet beyond the 25 foot non-clearing buffer).

Modifications to these requirements may occur if a geotechnical report demonstrates that a lesser distance, and design / engineering solutions, will adequately protect both the proposed development and the erosion hazard and/or landslide area. Likewise, if the geotechnical report identifies the need for a greater buffer, a larger area of protection will be required.

## Vegetation Alterations

Existing native vegetation within the buffer and critical area must remain in its natural condition, unless approved otherwise by DCD.

Upon approval by DCD, vegetation may only be removed if:

- Limited plant removal is necessary for surveying
- A hazard tree has been determined unsafe

Under certain circumstances, DCD may allow minor pruning of vegetation and tree limbs for view enhancement.

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## Field Marking Requirements

For land use and logging permits, critical area buffers and proposed areas for clearing must be marked in the field for inspection and approval by DCD or Kitsap County Department of Public Works prior to beginning work.

For construction of a single family residence, field marking requirements will be determined by DCD.

In any case, all field markings along buffers must remain in place until construction is final and final approval has been given by DCD and Public Works.

## Seasonal Restrictions

Clearing, grading and filling will be permitted from April 1 to October 1, unless the landowner provides an erosion control plan that clearly and realistically demonstrates methods of erosion control for wet weather conditions.

The applicant must also comply with the requirements of the County's Stormwater Management Ordinance.

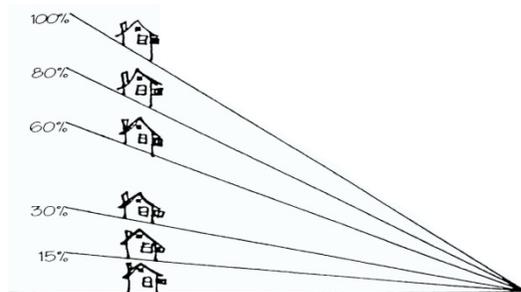
If the CAO and the Stormwater Ordinance conflict, the more restrictive and more protective provisions must apply.

## Other Restrictions and Provisions

Examples of activities which are subject to the standards contained in the CAO and other applicable federal state and local ordinances include:

- Building/clearing activities
- Cut and fill slopes for road construction
- Forest practices, Class IV General, and Conversion Option Harvest Plans (COHPs)
- View corridors

For specific information on these and other restrictions and provisions, consult the Kitsap County Code or call DCD at (360) 337-5777.



↑ PERCENT SLOPE  
Slope is calculated by dividing the vertical distance by the horizontal distance, then multiplying the result by 100.  
Example:  $\frac{\text{Vertical Distance of 20 feet}}{\text{Horizontal Distance of 100 feet}} = .2 \times 100 = 20\% \text{ slope}$

