



Recovery and Rebuilding:

Travel Trailers, Recreational Vehicles & Other Temporary Housing after the CZU Lightning Fire

Meeting Housing Needs During Disaster Recovery

Occupying recreational vehicles (RVs) and other types of temporary structures or accommodations is allowed with approval of an administrative Temporary Housing Permit (“THP”) issued by the County Planning Department. THPs may be issued for previously legally developed sites in the burn area that were damaged by the fire, and for legally developed sites that are not in the burn area when the temporary accommodation houses people who were displaced by fire. A THP will not be issued for any vacant parcel or, at least at this time, a parcel that was developed without permits, inside or outside the burn area. The Board of Supervisors has requested that programs to recognize illegal structures in some manner be explored, and it may be that the policy about non permitted structures and THPs may be modified in the future.

The THP can be issued after an expedited review. Temporary housing approved through a THP are not required to meet all current standards that apply to permanent uses or structures. This approach can support temporary or phased occupancy while rebuilding.

Required Clearances

Temporary housing can be authorized by County Planning Department staff only **after required safety clearances have been obtained**. Information on required clearances is found in the “Application Requirements” at the end of this document.

Temporary Permit – Basic Requirements

- There must be a legal residence on the parcel, or the residence that was destroyed must have been built with a permit; and
- There must be an approved source of water, a sewage disposal system, and electricity.

Temporary housing may include, but is not limited to, trailers, recreational vehicles (RVs), tiny homes, temporary modular structures, storage containers or yurts that are modified to meet building code standards for habitability, and similar configurations, as well as existing legal structures that have not previously been habitable. Basic habitability, safety and housing standards must be met by any type of proposed accommodation or structure. For more information on habitability requirements contact:

Planning.ZoningInfo@santacruzcounty.us

Number of RVs or Temporary Accommodations or Structures: A maximum of one (1) temporary housing unit is allowed to replace each residence that was damaged or destroyed. On a case by case basis, additional units may be permitted where there is a demonstrated need and all units can be adequately served by utilities.

Time Limitation: Temporary Permits are valid for an initial period up to three years unless otherwise specified, with further one-year extensions possible if the rebuild is in process. Where an RV is located outside the burn area, parked in a driveway, and it encroaches into required setbacks, it may be approved for up to six months,

with extensions available on a case by case basis. For temporary housing on parcels located outside of the burn area, proof will be required that the structure is inhabited by persons displaced by the fire who are still in the process of reconstruction. The Temporary Permit will expire once final inspection of the new home is complete.

Location of Temporary Structures

Inside the Burn Area: Temporary housing shall be located outside the boundaries of any recorded easements, but may be located within zoning ordinance setback areas, other than riparian (creekside) setbacks, if such placement of the temporary housing is necessary to allow for unobstructed reconstruction on the site.

Outside of the Burn Area: Temporary housing that will be in place more than 6 months must be installed within the property boundaries and outside of any front, rear, or side yard setbacks. Please verify that the setbacks for the subject parcel are shown on the plot plan submitted with your application and are consistent with the zone district. Temporary housing cannot encroach on any existing drainage, utility or access easements and shall avoid septic and leach field areas and other site constraints. **EXCEPTION:** If no other suitable location exists, short-term occupancy (up to 6 months) of RVs and trailers parked on existing driveways and parking areas, located within setbacks, is allowed, with extensions available on a case by case basis.

To determine setbacks visit the Planning Department website at www.sccoplanning.com. Your zone district is available via the link "Mapping & GIS" (right side bar), click on "legend" on left side, and select the "Zoning" overlay. Setbacks for each district are available on the Planning Department website at www.sccoplanning.com via the link "County Code" on the left sidebar. Go to Title 13, left sidebar, section 13.10.323(B). You can also receive setback information by emailing Planning.ZoningInfo@santacruzcounty.us.

Other Siting and Sewage Connection considerations: Temporary residential structures must be placed on level areas. Work to create a level area for placement of a temporary housing structure, or to create access to a level area may require a separate grading permit. Construction of retaining walls to create a level area requires a separate building permit and a soil report review.

Standards

Except for existing legal structures, temporary accommodations are limited to those that are not on a permanent foundation, such as a "Recreational Vehicle" or "Travel Trailer (5th wheel)" and can be removed from a site after expiration of the Temporary Permit. Issuance of a Temporary Permit shall not be interpreted as an indication that permanent permitted status will be achieved in the future.

"Modular Homes" must be approved through the California Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD) as a manufactured or factory-built home.

"Tiny Homes" and other structures must meet the requirements and be certified by the appropriate State Agency as a Manufactured Home ("MH"), Factory-Built Housing ("FBH"), Recreational Vehicle ("RV"), Park Trailer ("PT"), Camping Cabin ("CC"), or meet and be reviewed and inspected for compliance, with the California Residential Code or California Building Code (CRC or CBC).

ADUs: Manufactured homes, modular homes, and some tiny homes may be able to be approved as either the primary unit or an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). Note that ADUs have size limitations and standards that must be met. For fire recovery purposes the County will permit construction of an ADU in advance of permitting the replacement home that it would be accessory to. For more information on ADUs please refer the Planning Department website at www.sccoplanning.com, under the link "Accessory Dwelling Units". If the structure is proposed to remain, located either within or outside the burn areas, a Building Permit will be required consistent with the standard application process.

Note: Occupancy of structures that have sustained partial damage in the recent fire, as well as occupancy of a portion of a replacement dwelling before it is completed, may be able to qualify for a Temporary Occupancy Permit (TOP). Under the California Building Code, temporary occupancy may be approved if the Building Official

can make the finding that no substantial life, safety, or health hazards exist by allowing occupancy of the building. For more information on habitability requirements for structures contact:

Planning.ZoningInfo@santacruzcounty.us

ALL TEMPORARY RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES, INCLUDING RVS AND TRAILERS, MUST HAVE WORKING SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS.

Utility Connections

Inside the Burn Area: All temporary residential structures or accommodations shall be connected to utilities in accordance with the following criteria:

A Water Source meeting one of the following criteria:

1. Public water supply (contact the appropriate water agency for requirements).
2. Existing well that has been approved by the County Environmental Health as producing water that is safe for domestic consumption.
3. Other water source approved by the County Environmental Health.

An approved sewage disposal system meeting one of the following criteria:

1. Public sewer system, (contact the County Sanitation Department at dpw.lateralprogram@santacruzcounty.us).
2. Existing on-site sewage disposal (septic) system that has been approved by the County and determined by Environmental Health to be intact, adequately sized, and functioning following the disaster. Sewage connections should be made to allow for gravity flow to disposal location, otherwise a grinder pump will be required. Connections to septic tanks shall be made at the inlet end. A Plumbing Permit is required for the P-Trap connection, OR
3. Other method of sewage disposal approved by the County Environmental Health.

An approved source of electricity, such as a permitted Temporary Power Pole hooked-up to the utility (PG&E) or another power source approved by the County Building Official or Planning Director. Use of generators is prohibited as a source of energy. Limited periods of generator use to periodically supplement batteries where adequately sized solar is the primary energy source may be allowed on a case by case basis.

Outside the Burn Area: Water and electricity may be obtained directly from the existing development on the parcel and occupants may use existing bathroom facilities. Separate connections are not allowed. Self-contained recreational vehicles (RVs) located on existing developed parcels that are served by public sewer are required to discharge waste at an authorized dump station.

NOTE: The use of extension cords to power a temporary living space such as an RV is not recommended. For extended stays, hard wiring should be in place. Extension cords are designed to power equipment on a day to day basis and are not sunlight resistant. It is therefore recommended that a permit be obtained for a more permanent wiring method. This method should include but is not limited to underground conduit with the proper size and type of wire, a permanent plug, and a watertight enclosure.

For parcels not served by a public sewer, the temporary residential structure shall be connected to the septic system or other approved arrangement in accordance with Environmental Health regulations.

Temporary Storage

Temporary and removable storage structures, such as shipping containers or other commercially rentable structures, may be installed on any parcel within the burn area for the storage of goods during the reconstruction of destroyed structures and are subject to the same location requirements as for temporary residential structures. No permit will be issued for temporary storage structures until Phase 1 Debris Removal is complete.

Application Requirements

Safety Clearances

- **Temporary Housing Clearance – issued by Environmental Health**

This clearance confirms on-site potable water and a functioning septic system. Contact Environmental Health staff for more information at: env.hlth@santacruzcounty.us

For sites that are located where there is sewer available inside the burn area, contact the County Sanitation Department at dpw.lateralprogram@santacruzcounty.us **for sewer connection requirements.**

- **Temporary Geologic Hazard Clearance – issued by Planning Department**

Prior to issuance of a THP, properties must be evaluated to determine whether there are significant life safety risks from geologic hazards that can be identified from existing information before habitation can be approved.

Associated Permits:

- **Over-the-Counter Electrical and Plumbing Permits are required for temporary power and for connections to the septic system (“P-Trap” installation) – issued by the Building Department.** These permits will be combined with your THP process.

P-Trap Applicability: A “P-Trap” is a plumbing fixture that, when connected to a toilet in an RV, tiny home, or other type of accessory structure, stops sewer or septic gases from passing into the living space. A “P-Trap” shall be installed on all toilets that are connected to septic or sewer.

Application Form:

For all other application requirements please see the Temporary Permit Application Form: [here](#)