

**Santa Cruz County Planning Department Policy/Ordinance
Interpretation**

Interpretation No.: GRD-01 (Cut Height – Fill Depth)
Effective Date: 7/30/03
Originally Issued: 7/30/03

Question:

What is the definition of the height of a cut or the depth of a fill and how is this measurement accomplished in the field for purposes of determining whether a grading permit is required?

Applicable Ordinance Section(s)
§16.20.050(a) and (b)

INTERPRETATION:

Height or depth of a cut (excavation) is defined as the vertical dimension of the exposed cut surface. (Please see the figure on the next page.)

Height or depth of a fill (embankment) is defined as the vertical dimension of the exposed fill surface. (Please see the figure on the next page.)

Reason

County Code Section 16.20.050 (a) and (b) describe grading thresholds for cuts and fills which, when exceeded, require a grading permit. The Code has never clearly defined the height or depth of a cut or fill and has never contained guidance as to how to measure cuts and fills in the field. Intuitively, the height or depth of a cut or fill is the vertical dimension of the cut or fill surface. This accords with typical measurements of height, including that of structures. County Code Section 13.10.700-H defines height of a structure as the vertical distance between the existing or finish grade, whichever is lower, to the uppermost point of the structure.

Quantification of these features shall be accomplished by measuring the vertical dimension of the cut and/or fill, as depicted in the attached figure. Methods for taking these measurements include use of survey equipment, geometric calculation, or retention of a qualified professional. Because the thresholds for obtaining a Grading Permit include creation of cuts exceeding 5 feet in height, fills greater than 2 feet in depth, or movement of greater than 100 cubic yards of earth, these calculations are critical and should be carefully prepared before beginning work. Please see the figure on the next page.


Alvin James, Planning Director 9/8/03

The height or depth of a cut (excavation) or fill (embankment) is defined as the vertical dimension of the exposed cut surface or exposed fill surface, respectively

