



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency – Environmental Health

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY - Call 711 <http://www.scceh.org>
EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us



August 7, 2023

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) **Soil Boring Permit Requirements and** **Abandonment Procedures in Santa Cruz County**

1. Which soil borings require soil boring permits from Santa Cruz County Environmental Health (SCCEH)?

SCCEH requires soil boring permits for all soil borings that intersect groundwater or are advanced to investigate groundwater (E.g., grab groundwater sample collection, liquefaction studies).

2. How many days prior to my drill date should I submit a soil boring permit application?

SCCEH's soil boring policy states you must allow 10 business days for SCCEH to process your permit. In cases where drilling activities must be expedited, you may request a shorter turnaround time and we will likely be able to accommodate your request. In all instances, please be sure that all information is accurate on your boring permit application to ensure the smooth and timely processing of your soil boring permit.

Once the permit is approved, you must provide a two-business day notification to SCCEH prior to commencement of any field drilling activities. This notification ensures appropriate coordination and oversight of soil boring activities.

3. What are the current soil boring permit fees, and what services do these fees cover?

The current permit fee for a soil boring permit is \$420 per project for the first three borings, with an additional charge of \$105 for each subsequent boring. The fee covers our time to review and finalize the boring permit application, as well as conducting inspections for boring abandonment.

Additionally, a cancelled inspection fee of \$210 may be incurred in the event a consultant fails to notify the inspector of cancelled drilling activities. An extra inspection fee of \$210 may be incurred if unforeseen field conditions require two inspections.

4. Which soil borings require proper sealing with grout or other approved sealing materials?

In accordance with the DWR Standards, it is recommended to properly seal all soil borings to prevent potential cross-contamination from surface spills or other sources of contamination. However, SCCEH is only enforcing the proper abandonment of soil borings that encounter groundwater or are used to determine hydrologic conditions currently.

5. What are the DWR Standards (California Department of Water Resources Well Bulletins 74-81 and 74-90)?

The DWR Well Standards (specifically the DWR Bulletins 74-91 and 74-90) consist of construction standards that govern various types of wells in California, including water wells, monitoring wells, and cathodic protection wells. These standards were developed to protect groundwater quality by establishing best practice well construction methods to help mitigate the creation of preferential pathways that may affect groundwater and physical hazards that an abandoned well or boring may create.

Although the DWR standards predominately contain protocols for construction of water wells, the DWR standards include methods for the proper abandonment of exploration holes (soil borings) in both Bulletins 74-81 (section 20) and 74-90 (Monitoring Well Chapter). Water Code 13801 requires Local Enforcing Agencies (LEAs), such as local governments, counties, cities, and some water districts, to enforce the minimum standards of Bulletin 74-81.

6. Can soil cuttings ever be used as backfill in the abandonment of soil borings?

The DWR Standards indicate in the Monitoring Well Chapter of Bulletin 74-90, Section 19 that “Drilling mud or cuttings are not acceptable as any part of fill material.”

7. How do we get approval to leave the soil boring open more than 24 hours to monitor groundwater?

A soil boring left open more than 24 hours to monitor groundwater conditions is considered a monitoring well and a monitoring well permit is required.

8. Why is it necessary to include soil boring locations on a map when submitting a permit application?

The purpose of placing the boring locations on a site plan is to show that soil borings will be adequately placed away from (and not limited to) surface water, OWTS, and wells. This ensures that potential sources of contamination are avoided during drilling activities. The site plan will also provide the location of the drilling activities for the SCCEH inspector.

Prior to placing the borings on the site map to be included in the boring permit application, a field reconnaissance visit should be conducted by the geotechnical consultant or engineering geologist to avoid any unanticipated obstacles to your drilling locations. However, SCCEH understands that unanticipated field conditions during drilling may require additional borings or changes to boring locations.

9. Will soil boring permit fees be refunded if the permitted soil boring is not advanced?

We will not be issuing refunds of permit fees for borings not advanced because we must recoup our cost for reviewing the permit. However, SCCEH anticipates the flat rate boring permit fee for 3 borings will help consultants avoid permitting unnecessary borings.

10. Why is it necessary to seal borings in locations where groundwater or soil contamination is not observed during field activities?

In many cases, contamination in soil or groundwater cannot be visually detected or identified by odor alone. A geotechnical or an environmental consultant cannot determine if contamination exists at a site without adequate laboratory testing by an experienced professional. Therefore, only sealing soil borings in areas of known or observed contamination is insufficient in protecting our groundwater resources. Additionally, an improperly abandoned soil boring may provide a preferential pathway if site conditions change in the future (such as if hazardous materials are introduced to the property or groundwater levels change).

Please be aware that if previously unknown contamination is encountered during drilling activities, it is crucial for the responsible professional to notify SCCEH immediately or soon as practically possible in accordance with Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC) 7.100.

11. Which soil borings used for OWTS design will be required to be permitted?

According to Section 4 of DWR Bulletin 74-90, soil borings used in the design of OWTS that are less than 10 feet below grade (ft bg) are not required to be permitted. However, soil borings used in the design of OWTS that are advanced beyond 10 ft bg and either encounter groundwater or are used to determine groundwater conditions will require permits.

12. Is a C-57 license required to destroy hand augured borings?

The responsibility for adhering to all state standards and regulations lies with the consultant or contractor conducting the hand augured soil boring. SCCEH will not enforce contractor licensing requirements specifically for hand augured borings.

13. Will hydrated bentonite chips be allowed as sealing material to destroy shallow soil borings?

All sealing materials must meet criteria listed in DWR Bulletins 74. Proposed methods listed on the soil boring permit application will be reviewed by SCCEH.

14. Will SCCEH allow deviations from DWR Bulletin 74 due to site-specific circumstances?

Yes. In the unusual circumstance that a soil boring destruction must deviate from the destruction standards in DWR Bulletin 74, SCCEH will review the proposed destruction method and, if acceptable, issue a variance specific to the soil boring destruction.

15. What are SCCEH's requirements for the disposal of soil cuttings?

It is the responsibility of the drilling contractor and consultant to dispose of soil cuttings in compliance with all applicable state standards and regulations. However, if the soil boring drilling site is known to be or suspected to be contaminated or is currently undergoing regulatory environmental cleanup, SCCEH will require the proper assessment and off-site disposal of soil cuttings in accordance with state laws and regulations. In such cases, a report detailing the off-hauling activities must be submitted to SCCEH. The report should

include relevant manifests and/or transportation and disposal documentation that the soil has been appropriately disposed of.

16. Will SCCEH require the sealing of soil borings from the total boring depth to the ground surface?

Approved sealing materials must be appropriately placed from total boring depth to a minimum depth of two ft bg.

17. Will SCCEH require the sealing material to be “tremied” into the soil boring?

If the borehole is unstable, extends beyond 30 ft bg, contains more than two feet of water, or contains water more than 10% of the borehole length, a tremie pipe or another method approved by SCCEH must be utilized to place the sealing material into the soil boring. When water is present, the bottom of the tremie pipe must remain in the sealing materials throughout the sealing process.

18. If drilling is postponed, will we need to apply for another permit?

If drilling activities are postponed, it is the consultant’s responsibility to notify SCCEH of the schedule change and there will be no need to apply for another permit. If SCCEH is not notified of the postponement, an extra inspection fee of \$210 may be incurred.

19. How long until a soil boring permit expires?

A soil boring permit is valid for one mobilization. The soil boring permit automatically expires one year after the original permit issuance date.