BALDWIN
COUNTY, ALABAMA

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Requirements for Development in Special Flood Hazard Area
Coastal A and V Zones

If you are planning any project (including but not limited to new construction, additions, alterations/repairs, etc.) within a Special Flood Hazard Area, please review the Baldwin County Floodplain Development Ordinance available at https://baldwincountyal.gov/departments/building-inspection/flood-zone-information and also review the requirements below.

Requirements for Development within the Coastal High Hazard: Coastal A-Zones and V-Zones

- All construction must comply with the International Code Series adopted by the Baldwin County Commission
- All construction must comply with the Baldwin County Floodplain Development Ordinance adopted by the Baldwin County Commission
- **No habitable area is allowed below Base Flood Elevation + 1 foot freeboard.**
- A Temporary Benchmark or Elevation Certificate is required before the permit is issued.
- A Coastal A-Zone or V-Zone Design Certificate Form is required before the permit is issued. You may download the form here: Coastal-A-Zone or V-Zone Design Certificate Form
- An "Under Construction" Elevation Certificate may be required if deemed necessary by the Building Official.
- A “Finished Construction” Elevation Certificate must be submitted to the Building Dept. at least 24 hours prior to scheduling a final inspection.
- Elevation Certificates must be signed and stamped by an Alabama registered design professional.
- All residential new construction requires engineered construction plans to be signed and stamped by an Alabama licensed architect OR engineer.
  Exceptions: Detailed non-engineered construction plans **may** be accepted for small additions, alterations/repairs, accessory structures, storage buildings, pole barns, porches, decks, etc.
- All non-residential/commercial construction requires construction plans to be signed and stamped by both an Alabama licensed architect AND engineer.
- Engineered plans (signed and stamped) are required on all breakaway walls for enclosed rooms below the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) and for structural components attached to main structures below BFE.*
- There shall be no man-made alterations or sand dunes in any V-Zone.
- Swimming pools must be installed completely above BFE + 1 foot freeboard, level with adjacent grade, or engineer approved.
- All construction material used below BFE + 1 foot freeboard must be approved flood resistant materials to prevent rot or decay.#
- All propane gas tanks are to be installed completely above BFE + 1 foot freeboard, adequately anchored below ground to resist flotation or movement during flood events.
- All enclosed areas below BFE + 1 foot freeboard shall only be used for parking of vehicles, building access, and limited storage area for maintenance items used in conjunction with the property, and must be built using approved flood resistant materials.
- Bottom of lowest horizontal structural member must be elevated above BFE + 1 foot freeboard.
- Electrical meters are allowed below BFE + 1 foot freeboard. Only one electrical circuit with GFI protection is allowed below BFE + 1 foot freeboard.
- All HVAC/mechanical systems, equipment, or components must be installed above BFE + 1 foot freeboard.
- No plumbing fixtures or appliances (e.g. bathrooms, washers, dryers, water heaters, refrigerators, freezers, etc.) are allowed below BFE + 1 foot freeboard.

- Solid walls are not allowed below BFE + 1 foot freeboard unless otherwise approved by the Floodplain Administrator.
- All foundations must be pile or column supported unless otherwise approved by the Floodplain Administrator.
- Fill material is prohibited to be used for structural support of buildings. No more than 2 feet of fill material (soil or sand) may be used for landscaping and leveling purposes.
- All enclosed areas below BFE + 1 foot freeboard shall have hydrostatic vents installed, minimum two (2) separate walls, minimum two (2) hydrostatic openings, one square inch of vent area per one square foot of storage is required. Engineered or non-engineered flood vents that meet the above requirements will be accepted.

Storage & Accessory Structure Requirements

- Enclosed storage space below BFE + 1 foot freeboard underneath a structure must meet all flood requirements (i.e. break-away walls, flood vents, and flood resistant materials). A Building Permit and a Permit to Develop in a Special Flood Hazard Area (i.e. a Flood Permit) is required.
- Enclosed accessory structures installed below BFE + 1 foot freeboard are limited to a maximum of 100 SF, must be anchored, must be constructed using flood resistant materials, inside must be left unfinished, and must have flood vents. Small accessory structures include small storage structures such as metal, plastic, or wood sheds that are disposable. FEMA considers “small” to mean less than or equal to 100 square feet. A Permit to Develop in a Special Flood Hazard Area (i.e. a Flood Permit) is required.
- Enclosed accessory structures larger than 100 SF must be installed above BFE + 1 foot freeboard. A Permit to Develop in a Special Flood Hazard Area (i.e. a Flood Permit) is required. Enclosed accessory structures larger than 120 SF for commercial or 200 SF for residential will also require an Accessory Structure Permit.
- Enclosed detached garages below BFE + 1 foot freeboard are not allowed in Coastal A & V Zones.
- Storage space and accessory structures below BFE + 1 foot freeboard that are open/not enclosed (ex. gazebos, pole barns, louvered enclosures, etc.) are not required to meet the maximum square footage requirements listed above. However, permits are still required. For all requirements, refer to the Baldwin County Floodplain Development Ordinance and the FEMA Technical Bulletin 5: Free of Obstruction Requirements.

Additional Resources

Free-of-Obstruction Requirements, NFIP Technical Bulletin 5 (March 2020)
https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_tb5_free_obstruction_requirements.pdf

*Design and Construction Guidance for Breakaway Walls (August 2008)
https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_tb9_design_construction_guidance_breakway_walls.pdf

#Flood Damage-Resistant Materials Requirements, Technical Bulletin 2 (August 2008)
https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_tb_2_flood_damage-resistant_materials_requirements.pdf