



ROANOKE COUNTY
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
Office of Building Safety



**DEVELOPMENT ON or NEAR STEEP
SLOPES**

Commercial & Residential Projects

BACKGROUND

The 2021 edition of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code contains provisions to regulate construction on or near steep slopes. These regulations apply to slopes which are in excess of a 1 to 3 ratio or 33.3% and apply to both commercial and residential construction. The specific code sections are located in sections 1808 of the 2021 Virginia Construction Code and R403.1.7 of the 2021 Virginia Residential Code. The intent of the code is to provide protection from drainage, erosion and shallow failure or sloughing of the building site.

REQUIREMENTS

The code requires structures to maintain minimum setbacks from both the bottom and top of slopes in excess of 33.3%. The formula to determine the required setback differs depending on the intended location of the structure. Structures located at the bottom of a slope are required to be setback a distance equal to one-half of the height of the slope but no more than 15 feet. Structures located at the top of a slope are required to be setback a distance equal to one-third the height of the slope but no more than 40 feet. If you intend to build on or near a slope and the building is within the stated setback limits, you must submit an engineered site study and foundation plan prior to a permit being issued.

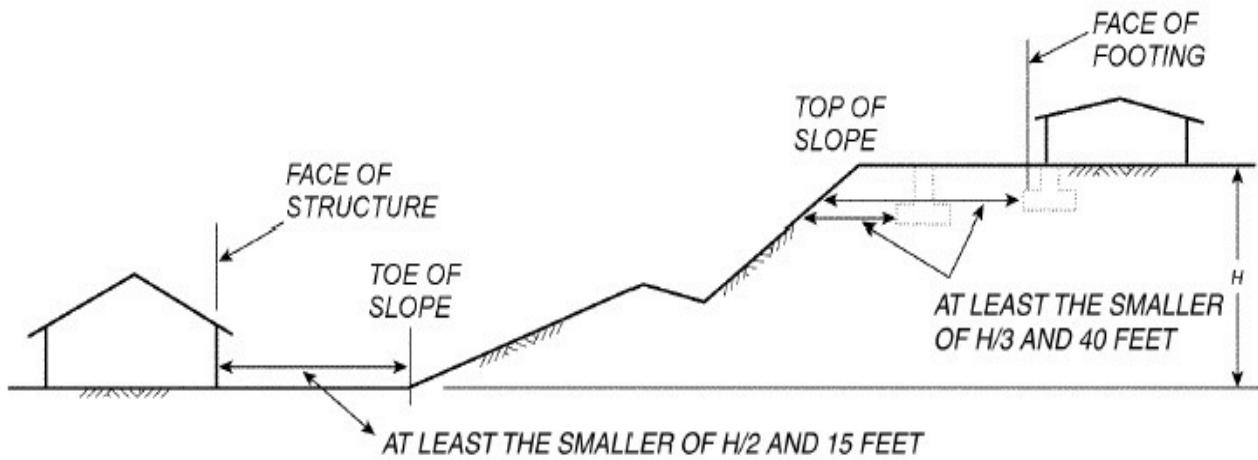


FIGURE R403.1.7.1
FOUNDATION CLEARANCE FROM SLOPES

*Note that setbacks are measured from the face of the structure at the bottom of a slope and from the face of the footing when located at the top of a slope.

ALTERNATIVES

Structures that are unable to meet the required setbacks due to topographical conditions, personal preferences or other site issues may do so with the submission of site study and a foundation design prepared by a registered professional engineer.

EXCEPTIONS

Small accessory buildings (<256 sq. ft.) and other structures not requiring permanent foundations are not subject to these requirements. Minor additions to existing structures may be exempted from these requirements on a case by case basis by the building commissioner.