



NON-REINFORCED RETAINING WALLS

CITY OF HIGHLAND BUILDING DIVISION
27215 BASELINE, HIGHLAND, CA 92346
(909) 864-8732



Policy No. 355

PURPOSE: To identify that all residential retaining walls approved by the Building and Safety Division or those exempted by the California Building Code (CBC) Administrative Chapter need to be of the type that incorporates vertical and horizontal steel reinforcement.

POLICY: All residential retaining walls either exempted by the CBC or those that require a City permit and approval by the Building and Safety Division are to be of the construction type that incorporates horizontal reinforcement in the footing and has vertical reinforcement that provides a connection between the footing and supporting wall elements. Reinforced walls must be constructed to City Standards or Professional Design through the plan review process for approval.

Exemption 1: To qualify for exemption, all three of the following item must be achieved. 1.) The non-reinforced wall height is no greater than two feet and retaining soil no higher than the wall, and; 2.) The retained area does not accept water runoff from other areas or a neighboring property, and; 3.) The retained soil is a flat area easily recognized as a planter. This exemption may still need a Burrito/French drain system installed at the top of the footing or base material.

Exemption 2: locations within a development where an HOA or other responsible organization controls and maintains the slope and wall.

Non-reinforced wall types are often identified as, but not limited to; geogrid, batter, and gravity wall.

ANALYSIS: During heavy rain and runoff events many storm water control systems can become overwhelmed. Engineering and Building personnel have seen that unreinforced walls have been known to fail during these events or anytime the hydraulic water pressure exceeds the design capability. Further, many types of non-reinforced retaining walls require periodic maintenance that may not be performed, thus, becoming a factor in failures. Another unknown factor is some of these walls may be unknowingly damaged when installing plants in areas above the wall.

Effective Date: April 2019

Revision Date:

Reference Code & Section: