



MEMORANDUM

To **All Staff of Yolo Builds**

From **Scott Doolittle, Chief Building Official**

Date **May 23, 2024 (Replaces September 1, 2023 Memo)**

Subject **Policy on Building Permits for Greenhouses**

Greenhouses

The California Building Code defines a greenhouse as the following:

A structure or thermally isolated area of a building that maintains a specialized sunlit environment used for and essential to the cultivation, protection or maintenance of plants.

Streamlined Permit for a Greenhouse

Greenhouses are only eligible to be streamlined if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

1. The greenhouse must comply with all laws and regulations including those of Planning, Environmental Health, Public Works, and other local, state, and federal regulations.
2. The greenhouse shall not be used for any use except for the following agricultural uses:
 - a. Watering
 - b. Fertilizing
 - c. Moving plants and equipment
 - d. Setting up the greenhouse, to include light-deprivation cloth, plastic or fabric, and
 - e. Other uses approved in writing by the building official.
3. **Accessible.** Greenhouses shall be accessible in accordance with [Chapter 11](#).
4. **Size.** The greenhouse must be a single story with a maximum width of 40 feet and a maximum length of 100 feet.
5. **Fire Separation Distances.**
 - a. **10-feet from Greenhouse to Property Line**
 - b. **10-feet from Greenhouse to Greenhouse** except for groups of greenhouses with an aggregate area within the limits for a single greenhouse.
 - c. **20-feet from Greenhouse to any other structure.**
6. **Plumbing.** Irrigation approved by the building official.
7. **Electrical.** Lighting of any kind, including battery powered, solar powered, low voltage, or wired is not allowed. A separate electrical permit may be obtained for electrical at 120/240V and up to a maximum of 40 amps. All electrical will have to be performed by a C-10 licensed electrical contractor and designed for outdoor use. The

electrical must be mounted on an approved pole or similar structure. This permit may include the following receptacles and equipment:

- a. Ventilation fans listed for outdoor use.
- b. Electronic controlled pumps, motors, and solenoids used to control irrigation, shade canopy, and similar agricultural activities as approved by the building official.

California Fire Code (CFC) Section 603.6 states, “Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be a substitute for permanent wiring and shall be listed and labeled in accordance with UL 817. Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be affixed to structures, extended through walls, ceilings or floors, or under doors or floor coverings, nor shall such cords be subject to environmental damage or physical impact. Extension cords shall be used only with portable appliances. Extension cords marked for indoor use shall not be used outdoors.

Extension cords shall be plugged directly into an approved receptacle, power tap or multiplug adapter and, except for approved multiplug extension cords, shall serve only one portable appliance. The ampacity of the extension cords shall be not less than the rated capacity of the portable appliance supplied by the cord. Extension cords shall be maintained in good condition without splices, deterioration or damage. Extension cords shall be grounded where serving grounded portable appliances.”

8. **Floor.** The floor of the greenhouse must be natural soils or materials approved in writing by the building official.
9. **Structural.** Greenhouses shall comply with the structural requirements for greenhouses in [Chapter 16](#).
10. **Foundation.** The structure of the greenhouse must be low impact with members driven into the soil to a depth to provide adequate anchoring of the structure. No concrete (or similar stabilizing material) shall be used to secure the foundation.
11. **Membrane.** The material used to wrap the greenhouse must be flexible, lightweight, and meet the fire-resistance requirements for membrane structures in [Section 3102](#).
12. **Glass and glazing** used in greenhouses shall comply with [Section 2405](#). Plastic films used in greenhouses shall comply with [Section 3102.3](#).
13. **Light-transmitting plastics** shall be permitted in lieu of plain glass in greenhouses and shall comply with [Section 2606](#).
14. **Occupant Load.** The occupant load shall never exceed 30.
15. **Egress.** The greenhouse must have at least two means of egress with a clear width of not less than 3 feet.
16. **Doors.** Any doors or opening coverings across the means of egress must either be capable of walking through them without difficulty as determined by the building official or comply with CBC 1010.
17. **Threshold and Landings.** The landings and threshold across the doorway must be flush and of the same material as the greenhouse or comply with CBC 1010.
18. **Protrusions.** There shall not be any hooks or protrusions that would hinder rapid egress in an emergency.

Procedure for Streamlined Permit for Greenhouse

A permit can be streamlined using the following procedure

1. Submit a standard building permit application with a description of “Streamlined Greenhouse” with a site plan and either plans, pictures or product information for the greenhouse that will be installed. The fee for this permit application is [TBD – contact building.division@yolocounty.org for an estimate].
2. The permit application will be reviewed for meeting the criteria shown above.
3. Upon approval, the permit will be issued. You may now install the greenhouse.
4. If an electrical permit was issued, all required electrical inspections must be approved.

5. Once the greenhouse is installed but prior to any use of the greenhouse, call for an inspection. The inspector will review the structure for compliance with the criteria above. The inspector has discretion to require a full permit for any reason.
6. Upon approval of the greenhouse, post the certificate of occupancy in the greenhouse and only use it within the limitations of its approval.

Exempt from Permit (Hoop Houses)

Exemptions from permit requirements of this code shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be done in any manner in violation of the provisions of this code or any other laws or ordinances of this jurisdiction.

Unless the building official determines that a special circumstance exists that requires permitting, permits are not required for greenhouses if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

1. **Meets all of the requirements for a streamlined permit (see previous section).**
2. **Temporary.** The greenhouse shall not be erected for a period of 180 consecutive days or longer.
3. **No Utilities.** No electrical, mechanical, plumbing, or lighting of any kind shall be within, mounted on, or provide service to the greenhouse except for simple irrigation approved by the building official.

Regular Permit

Greenhouses reviewed as a regular building permit can be designed to the limitations of the California Building Code and other local, state, and federal regulations.

Most of the requirements in the California Building Code vary depending on the occupancy classification and use designation of the structure. A greenhouse can be one of the following:

- **Assembly Group A:** Greenhouses for the conservation and exhibition of plants that provide public access.
- **Factory Group F:** Greenhouses used for assembling, disassembling, fabricating, finishing, manufacturing, packaging, repair or processing operations that are not classified as a Group H hazardous occupancy.
- **High Hazard Group H:** Involves the manufacturing, processing, generation or storage of materials that constitute a physical or health hazard in quantities in excess of those allowed in control areas. For additional information, see [CBC 414](#) and [307](#).
- **Mercantile Group M:** Greenhouses for display and sale of plants that provide public access.
- **Utility and Miscellaneous Group U:** Greenhouses not classified as another occupancy shall be classified as Use Group U.