Voluntary Floodplain Home Elevation Program

Guidelines for Property Owners

This brochure is intended to assist property owners who will be participating with Snohomish County in elevating their home above regulatory flood level, using federal and state grant programs.

Before beginning this process, property owners are advised to complete two initial steps:

- Complete a Pre-Application Meeting with Planning & Development Services (PDS) staff. The Pre-Application Meeting provides key information such as whether your home may be elevated in its current location or if it must be relocated prior to elevation, how high the home must be elevated for long-term flood protection and whether a channel migration or geo-tech study is needed. To make an appointment for a Pre-Application Meeting, please call PDS at 425-388-3311.
- Discuss your elevation project with Public Works Surface Water Management (SWM) staff and determine if a cost-benefit analysis shows that it may be eligible for grant funding.

When Snohomish County is awarded grant funding for local projects to reduce flood damage, the role of SWM is primarily to manage the grant and to be a conduit of funds between the private property owners and the grant-funding agencies. The role of PDS is to guide the homeowners through the permit process so that the elevated building will meet all applicable laws and development regulations.

It is important for participants to understand that these grants are not construction loans—they are strictly reimbursement programs. The property owner must pay all project costs up front. Grant funds are reimbursed quarterly as the project is satisfactorily completed and approved by Snohomish County. The property owner must have sufficient personal funds to finance the project until reimbursement is made, a process which may take several months.
Obtain final Snohomish County inspections

1. Prepare for the permit issuance

   All applicable documents will be reviewed during the Pre-Application Meeting. Prior to receiving the required Snohomish County permits for your elevation project, you must sign a condition page, indicating your willingness to abide by the requirements of the building code for flood-prone areas. This includes agreeing not to convert the space below the lowest floor of an elevated structure to living space for human habitation, thereby ensuring it will remain available for the free flow of water during flood events.

2. Oversee the construction

   You will be required to oversee the construction project and work with a general contractor of your choosing. As the property owner, it is your responsibility to ensure that the contractor is completing the project in accordance with the grant agreement, corresponding permits and permit timelines.

3. Obtain reimbursement when the work is completed

   Costs that are eligible for reimbursement are specified in the agreement you sign with Snohomish County. Property owners are required to pay for all work up front and later obtain reimbursement from Snohomish County for eligible costs. In return, Snohomish County will ask the Washington State Emergency Management Division to provide reimbursement through the FEMA grant.

4. Obtain final Snohomish County inspections

   The Flood Hazard Permit must be completed (considered “final” by the county) before you can complete any other permits. When you receive your building permit from PDS, you will receive instructions on how to obtain your building inspections. During the inspection process, you will have to obtain revised Elevation Certificates at two different points. Please see your condition page, referenced in Step 7.

5. Once the house has been elevated and the new foundation installed, a revised Elevation Certificate will be required prior to final building inspection to document that the first finished floor or mechanical system has been elevated at least one foot above the 100-year flood elevation. A copy of this revised Elevation Certificate must also be provided to the SWM project manager who is managing the federal or state grant. Once the final inspection has been completed and PDS has signed off on the permit, you will need to provide this documentation to the SWM grant coordinator.

For more information on health department permit requirements, visit www.snohd.org or contact the Snohomish County Health District Environmental Division at 425-339-5200.

Note: Each of the permits required for your home elevation have timetables. Please monitor your project so that you will be able to successfully complete the required steps within the allowed period.

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**Step 1** Sign an Agreement with Snohomish County

Property owners who participate with Snohomish County in the Voluntary Floodplain Home Elevation Program are required to sign an agreement with the county that specifies the following:

- The respective roles and responsibilities of the property owner and the county.
- The percentage of funding the homeowner is required to contribute.
- The project items and activities that will be eligible for reimbursement.

When funds are provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the property owner must also agree to maintain a flood insurance policy on the property.

**Step 2** Obtain an “as-built” drawing and operational check of your septic system

The health department must be able to locate your existing septic system and ensure that it is in good working condition. This will require a copy of an “as-built” design of your septic system, which may be available through health department records. Property owners can request a search for this drawing by completing the “as-built” request form, available at www.snohd.org.

If you cannot locate this document, you will need to hire a certified On-Site System Maintainer (OSM) to locate the system and prepare an “as-built.” The health department maintains a list of certified OSMs on their website (www.snohd.org). For more information, contact the Snohomish Health District Environmental Health Division at 425-339-5200 or email: wwwquestions@snohd.org.

**Step 3** Obtain health department septic approval and permit

Once you have an “as-built” drawing, you will need to apply for a permit to request health department septic approval. You may also schedule an appointment through PDS at 425-388-3111 to schedule your appointment. You may also schedule an appointment through the PDS website at www.snohomishcountywa.gov/pds.

**Step 4** Prepare construction drawings

A qualified professional of your choice will need the following to prepare your construction drawings:

- A FEMA Elevation Certificate completed by a surveyor licensed in the State of Washington. The purpose of the certificate is to confirm the elevation of the existing first finished floor compared to the surface water elevation for the 100-year flood. You may check with SWM’s River and Floodplain Management staff at 425-262-2585 to see if an Elevation Certificate has already been prepared as a part of the federal grant application.
- The level to which your house must be raised. This information will be given to you during the Pre-Application Meeting, which is referenced on the first page of this brochure. With this information, the person preparing your plans can design the foundations footings, walls and other supporting assemblies, and draw the plans and details so that they reflect the required design and standards of the International Building Code.

**Step 5** Hire a contractor to complete your elevation project

As a part of the grant application, SWM requires that you obtain a bid for the construction of your project, and submit it to the county for proposal.

It is to your advantage to obtain several bids to find the one that fits best within the project budget. Some contractors only do the elevating, while others will do the elevating and construction of the new foundation. While many of the permit and technical study costs tend to be consistent from one project to the next, construction costs will differ depending on the condition of the existing foundation, the size of the house, soils and other factors.

**Step 6** Obtain Snohomish County permits

Elevating a structure in the floodplain will require that you obtain (1) a flood hazard permit (required for any activity in the floodplain) and (2) a building permit (covering the structure itself). Depending on your site, you may also need (3) a grading permit, and (4) a shoreline permit.

During the Pre-Application Meeting, referenced on the front page, PDS staff will let you know which permits are required for your project and site. Information, fees and requirements for each of these required permits are available online at www.snohd.org. Please use the search box to find information and obtain an application for each permit type.

Permit applications are submitted by appointment only. Please bring completed permit applications, completed checklists and all requested items indicated on the checklist to the permit appointment.

When you have those materials prepared, please call 425-388-3111, to schedule your appointment. You may also schedule an appointment through the PDS website at www.snohomishcountywa.gov/pds.

**Step 7** Prepare for the permit issuance

During the Pre-Application Meeting, PDS staff will be able to tell you which permits are required for your home elevation and outline the process for obtaining them. Please schedule an appointment through the PDS website at www.snohd.org or call 425-388-3111.

To receive federal reimbursement, you must obtain all necessary permits. The county will expedite reimbursement requests as much as possible so that you will be able to successfully complete the required steps within the allowed period.

**Step 8** Obtain the required steps within the allowed period

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**Step 9** Prepare for the permit issuance

All applicable documents will be reviewed during the Pre-Application Meeting. Prior to receiving the required Snohomish County permits for your elevation project, you must sign a condition page, indicating your willingness to abide by the requirements of the building code for flood-prone areas. This includes agreeing not to convert the space below the lowest floor of an elevated structure to living space for human habitation, thereby ensuring it will remain available for the free flow of water during flood events.

**Step 10** Oversee the construction

You will be required to oversee the construction project and work with a general contractor of your choosing. As the property owner, it is your responsibility to ensure that the contractor is completing the project in accordance with the grant agreement, corresponding permits and permit timelines.

**Step 11** Obtain reimbursement when the work is completed

Costs that are eligible for reimbursement are specified in the agreement you sign with Snohomish County. Property owners are required to pay for all work up front and later obtain reimbursement from Snohomish County for eligible costs. In return, Snohomish County will ask the Washington State Emergency Management Division to provide reimbursement through the FEMA grant.

Property owners will receive a standard form to request cost reimbursements from Snohomish County. To control administrative costs, the county limits the number of payment requests that property owners can submit to one request per three-month period. Reimbursement requests must meet the level of detail described in the contract—property owners must provide documentation for qualified expenses and payments—and requests must be for completed work. The county will expedite reimbursement requests as much as possible so that property owners can be reimbursed within a reasonable time (generally 45 days).

The county will expedite reimbursement requests as much as possible so that you will be able to successfully complete the required steps within the allowed period.