



Roanoke County Office of Building Safety

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Retaining Wall Guidelines

2021 Virginia USBC – Exemption from permits

Retaining walls supporting less than three feet of unbalanced fill. This exemption shall not apply to any wall impounding Class I, II or III-A liquids or supporting a surcharge other than ordinary unbalanced fill.

Permits are required for walls not meeting the above exemption per the following table.

<u>Height of unbalanced fill</u>	<u>Permit Required</u>	<u>Design Required</u>
< 3 feet	No	No
3 - <4 feet	Yes	No
4 - <6 feet	Yes	Yes*
6 feet and greater	Yes	Yes**

* Standard manufacturer designs are acceptable for walls up to 6 feet in height or fill.

** Walls 6 feet in height or greater are required to bear the seal of a Virginia Registered Design Professional **AND** are required to meet the requirements of the Special Inspections Program.

Minimum Design Plan Information;

- Minimum scale of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch = 1 foot; all dimensions must be shown.
- Specifications for the construction materials.
- Specification for the backfill material and compaction requirements.
- Wall elevations and multiple cross-sections of each retaining wall, to include structural details. The actual ground slope at the top and the toe of the retaining wall.
- Bearing capacity of the foundation soil.
- Method of drainage behind the wall.
- Guardrail location and details for retaining wall systems 30 inches and higher, to protect pedestrian traffic when applicable.
- Plans indicating walls which extend across multiple properties must include a description of provisions to be made to provide for access and maintenance of the wall.