

# Agricultural Building Permit Exemption

CNI-030

**Purpose:** To explain the procedures for processing agricultural building permit exemptions.

Section 7-7 of the Sonoma County Code provides building permit exemption provisions for “. . . buildings designed and constructed for use in housing farm machinery, animals, supplies or products that are harvested from or utilized on a parcel of land”. An agricultural use must presently exist on the property. Although the agricultural building does not need a building permit, the design and construction must comply with building code requirements. This exemption of the agricultural building is permitted on parcels five (5) acres or larger within the following zoning districts:

LIA (Land Intensive Agricultural)	RR (Rural Residential)
LEA (Land Extensive Agricultural)	TP (Timber Production)
DA (Diverse Agricultural)	AR (Agricultural and Residential)
RRD (Resources and Rural Development)	
RRDWA (Resources and Rural Development/Agricultural Preserve)	

The exemption shall apply only to a building that is an agricultural building as defined by Section 202 of the California Building Code (CBC). This section defines an agricultural building as “. . . a structure designed and constructed to house farm implements, hay, grain, poultry, livestock or other horticultural products. This structure shall not be a place of human habitation or a place of employment where agricultural products are processed, treated or packaged; nor shall it be a place used by the public.” The applicant must accurately and completely describe the proposed use of the building on the application.

The proposed exempt building is limited to two (2) stories of wood framed or manufactured engineered buildings. Wood structural members are limited to 25 foot spans unless an engineered plan of the building has been prepared and submitted with the application.

The proposed exempt building must be 60 feet from property lines and other non-exempt buildings. The distance to other non-exempt buildings may be reduced to 40 feet when fire resistive walls are not required by the building code and the site conditions prevent setbacks of 60 feet. Waste plumbing is not permitted in the building, and permits are required for any water system or electrical installations.

Unless otherwise authorized, the structure must be completed within three (3) years of the date of the authorization for exemption. If the structure is not completed within this time period, a new exemption is required. Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) staff will automatically schedule and conduct an inspection just prior to the three (3) year expiration of an approved exemption to verify that the building is complete and that there is an approved agricultural operation on the property.

## Required Application Materials:

1. Complete application for Agricultural Building Permit Exemption must be submitted by property owner.
2. Four (4) copies of site plan. See Minimum Standard Site Plan form [CSS-019](#).
3. Four (4) complete sets of building plans prepared, stamped and signed by licensed civil or structural engineer or architect are required **only** for manufactured engineered buildings or wood frame structures with spans exceeding twenty five (25) feet.
4. Complete Grading Permit Questionnaire (form [GRD-002](#)) to determine if a grading permit is required.

## Procedure:

1. Property owner submits required application materials and the Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) staff determine if the proposed building qualifies for the agricultural exemption based upon the property owner's documentation.
2. The property owner must obtain all required approvals prior to the building site evaluation.
3. A building site evaluation is conducted by PRMD staff to determine the following:
  - a. **Flood hazard zone.** Agricultural exempt buildings are not allowed in a flood hazard zone.
  - b. **Soil stability.** If a geotechnical report is recommended, an agricultural exemption cannot be approved until the report is submitted and approved.
  - c. **Grading permit** applicability. If a grading permit is required, the applicant shall obtain the grading permit before the agricultural exemption can be approved. Applicant shall complete form GRD-002, Grading Permit Questionnaire.
  - d. **Setback requirements.** Verify that the proposed building conforms to setback requirements.
  - e. **Agricultural use.** Verify that an agricultural use exists on the property.
4. If PRMD inspection staff determines that the agricultural exemption can be approved, the property owner will be notified of the approval by letter, and the building can then be constructed. No building inspections are required. If it is determined that the agricultural exemption cannot be approved, staff will notify the property owners by letter explaining the reasons for not approving the exemption.
5. PRMD staff will forward the exemption to the Recorder's office for recordation.

**Fees:** See current PRMD fee/rate schedule for: Agricultural building permit exemption fee; building site evaluation fee; zoning, septic and encroachment fees; application review at minimum 1/2 hour plans examiner hourly rate; and fire safe standard fee (for buildings larger than 8,000 square feet)

**Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department**  
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# Application for Agricultural Building Permit Exemption

CNI-030

Property Owner's Name	Contact Phone #	Site Address
Mailing Address		City/Town
City/Town	State/Zip	Assessor's Parcel Number(s)
Size of Proposed Building	Length / Width / Height	Permit Exemption Number
Present Use of Land		Total Acres
Use of Proposed Building		

In accordance with the provisions of Section 7-7 of the Sonoma County Code, I hereby request an agricultural building permit exemption. This application is for a building to be used for housing farm machinery, animals, supplies or products that are harvested from or utilized on the same parcel of land as the proposed building.

The proposed building complies with the following:

1. The building will be located 60 feet, or more, from all property lines.
2. The building will be located 60 feet, or more, from other non-exempt structures, unless a reduced separation is approved.
3. The building will not contain waste plumbing.
4. A building permit shall be obtained for any electrical work.
5. The parcel on which the building will be located is five (5) acres or greater.
6. The agricultural building, as defined in Section 202 of the CBC will not be used for human habitation or used by the public.
7. The building will be located on appropriately zoned agricultural property.
8. The property on which the building will be located is presently used for agricultural purposes.
9. The proposed exempt building is limited to two (2) stories of wood framed or manufactured engineered buildings. Wood structural members are limited to 25 foot spans unless an engineered plan of the building has been prepared and submitted with the application.
10. Not located in Flood Zone as established by Sonoma County Code chapter 7B.

I agree to comply with all County Ordinance and State Laws regulating building construction. I agree that construction on the proposed building shall not commence until the site evaluation has been completed and I have received written notification of approval from PRMD.

Signature of Property Owner \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

----- ◊ DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE - To Be Completed by PRMD Staff ◊ -----

### Required PRMD Division Approvals Prior to Building Site Evaluation

Staff Signature

#### Zoning

Zoning District: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Building

Separation between other non-exempt structures reduced to \_\_\_\_\_ feet. (no less than 40')

Spans of greater than 25 feet are permitted based on engineered plans.

#### Well & Septic

#### Stormwater / Drainage / Grading

#### Encroachment / Sanitation

#### Code Enforcement

Violation # : \_\_\_\_\_

#### Fire Services

Approved for Agricultural  
Building Permit Exemption

yes  no

Staff Signature

Date