



Slopes and Setbacks

BP-45

Department of Building and Planning

The Spokane County Critical Areas Ordinance and the International Building Code regulate construction or other activities on or adjacent to slopes. Areas containing soils prone to erosion or other geological hazards can be identified on maps available at the Department of Building and Planning.

This handout generally details the proper placement of building foundations in relation to adjacent slopes. If you are considering building on or near a slope of (1 vertical):(3 horizontal)-(33%)-or greater, the following information may be helpful. All material presented is in compliance with the International Building Code or International Residential Code as appropriate.

For the purpose of this brochure, a building's clearance (horizontal distance from an ascending or descending slope) is known as its "setback." Certain setbacks are required in most situations where a structure is built near a slope. This requirement is a safety measure to protect the public—and more specifically, the property owner—from the dangers of landslide, slope erosion, and foundation displacement. (The building official may approve alternate setbacks; however, an investigation of materials, slope, load intensity and erosion potential along with recommendations prepared by a qualified engineer may be required.)

Note: The "setbacks" identified in this brochure do not supercede the minimum setbacks required by the Building Code, Zoning Code or Critical Areas Ordinance.

1) For a structure at the **base** of a slope, the setback must be a distance no less than $\frac{1}{2}$ the height of the slope. (However, this distance need not exceed 15'.) The setback should be measured from the face of the building to the toe of the slope. See *Figure 1*.

2) For a structure at the **top** of a slope, the setback must be a distance of at least $\frac{1}{3}$ of the value of the slopes height. (This distance need not be more than 40' maximum.) In this case, the setback should be measured from the face of the footing to the face of the slope. See *Figure 1*.

NOTE: If the slope exceeds 1H:1V, either a special toe or an imaginary slope must be used, depending on the structure's location. The new positions are calculated and can be figured in the following manner:

TOE — Draw a plane tangent to the slope at an angle of 45° to the horizontal. The point at which the plane intersects the ground surface is considered the toe. See *Figure 2*.

TOP — Draw a plane from the toe of the slope at an angle of 45° to the horizontal. The required setback should be measured from this imaginary slope. See *Figure 3*

Other brochures that may be helpful

- BP-19B Erosion and Sediment Control Requirements
- BP-33 Site Plans & Construction Drawings
- BP-51 Application Submittal Requirements for Building Permits
- BP-52 Permit Processing Time Savers

For more information or an appointment contact:

Spokane County
Department of Building and Planning
1026 W. Broadway Avenue
Spokane, WA 99260-0050
(509) 477-3675 bp@spokanecounty.org
<http://www.spokanecounty.org/bp>

FIGURE 1

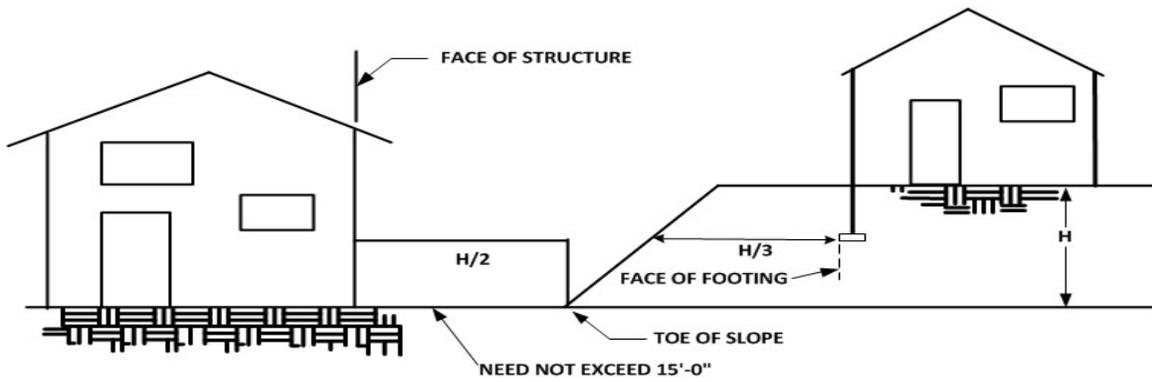


FIGURE 2

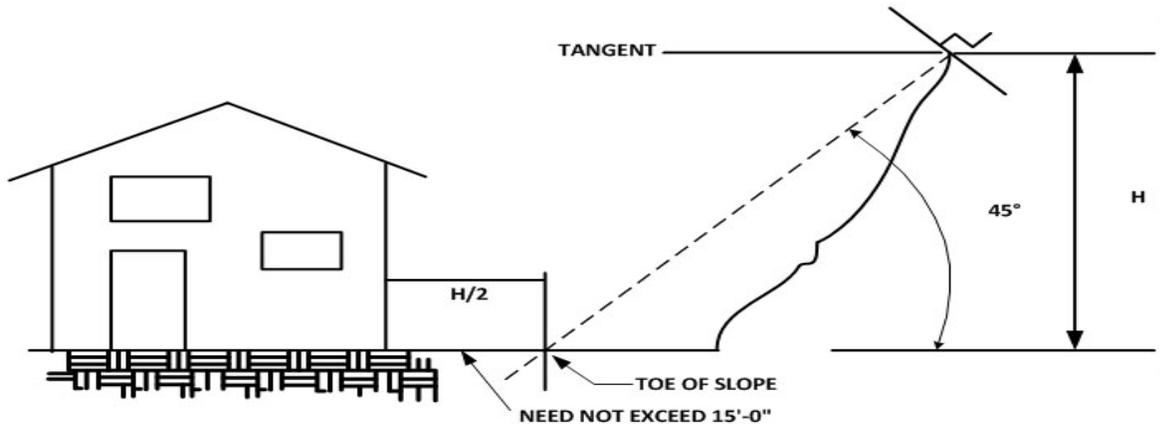
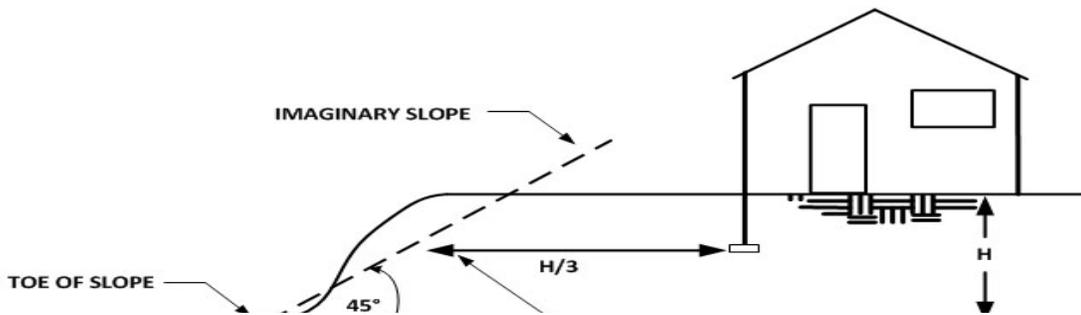


FIGURE 3



Please note that while every effort is made to assure the accuracy of the information contained in this brochure it is not warranted for accuracy. This document is not intended to address all aspects or regulatory requirements for a project and should serve as a starting point for your investigation. For detailed information on a particular project, permit, or code requirement refer directly to applicable file and/or code/regulatory documents or contact the appropriate division or staff.