

FACT SHEET – Retaining Walls

If you are intending to construct a retaining wall there are several things that you must consider before you can establish whether you need a building consent prior to undertaking the work.

These include but are not limited to:

- a) Any surcharge applied to the wall,
- b) the requirement to install a barrier to prevent people falling off the structure
- c) the impact on existing overland flow paths,
- d) combining a retaining wall with a fence may apply a surcharge and or mean a resource consent is required due to the effect on the neighbouring property.

Residential

You do not need a building consent for building work in connection with a retaining wall that:

- (a) retains not more than 1.5 metres depth of ground; and
- (b) does not support any surcharge or any load additional to the load of that ground (for example, the load of vehicles).

This exemption allows you to build a retaining wall (which is any wall constructed to retain or support the surrounding ground) without needing to get a building consent as long as it does not retain more than 1.5 metres (vertically) of ground and it includes ground water drainage in relation to retaining walls.

This exemption does not apply to retaining walls that are subject to any additional load or surcharge, such as:

- vehicle driveways
- parking spaces
- buildings, or
- sloping ground above the top of the retaining wall (refer to Figure A, B and C (over the page)).

We recommend people to seek suitable design advice for residential exempt retaining works as there is still an obligation to undertake building work in accordance with the building code.

Rural

You do not need a building consent for building work relating to some retaining walls in rural zones as long as the design is carried out or reviewed by a chartered professional engineer and,

- (a) the wall retains not more than 3 metres depth of ground; and
- (b) the distance between the wall and any legal boundary or existing building is at least the height of the wall.

ALERT:

If the ground above the top of the retaining wall is only gently sloping, this may not be considered as 'surcharge'. To determine the impact of the sloping ground and its pressure on the stability of the proposed retaining wall, you may wish to seek professional advice; for example, from a chartered professional engineer.

If there is a fall of 1 metre or more from the retaining wall you may be required to install a safety barrier (under Building Code clause F4 – Safety from falling). Factors to consider include the purpose/use of the retaining wall how accessible it is and whether it is frequented by young children.

Surcharge Examples:

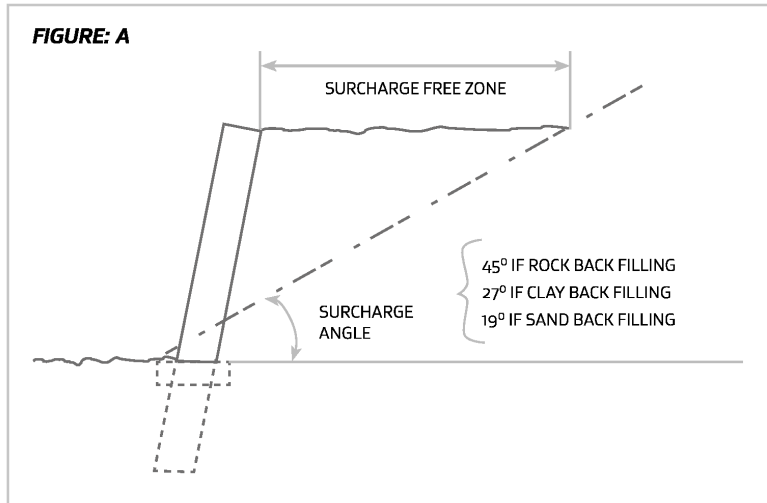


Figure A: Building consent not required

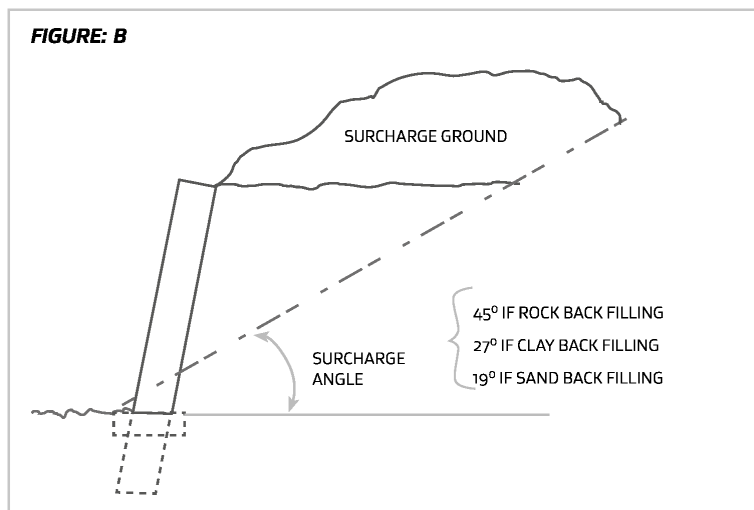


Figure B: Building consent required

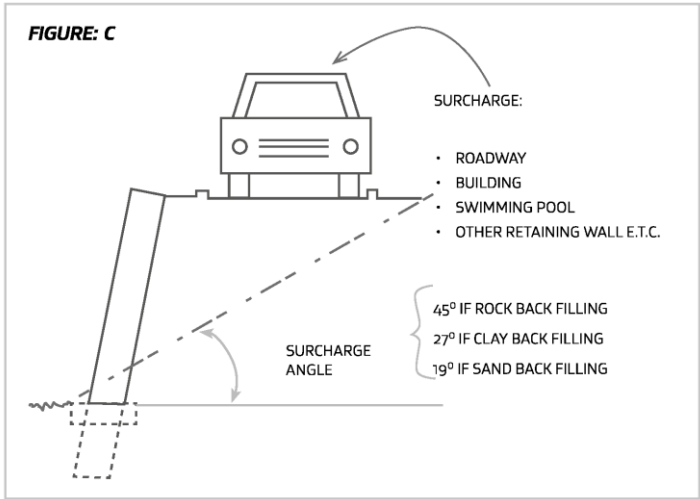


Figure C: Building consent required