

# **BEFORE YOU DIG....**

GET THE DIRT ON THE *DO'S* AND *DON'TS*  
OF LAND DISTURBANCE IN FAIRFAX COUNTY.



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**To report suspicious digging,  
dirt dumping or land clearing,  
Call the 24-hour hotline: 703-324-1937, TTY 711**

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Before you dig up or dump dirt in your yard, there are some important facts that you should know.

*Fairfax County may require you to get permits to clear land, dig up dirt or dump fill dirt.*

This is because these “land disturbance” actions can cause soil erosion that can harm your home, your neighborhood and our environment. To disturb the land means to cut down trees or shrubs, excavate, grade, add fill dirt.

### **When do I need county permits to dig up dirt, dump fill dirt or clear land?**

You need a site permit and grading plan anytime you will disturb 2,500 square feet or more of land. You also will need to put down a conservation deposit.



Projects that may disturb 2,500 square feet of land include:

- Building an addition to your home.
- Building a large garage or carport.
- Installing a paved driveway or in-ground swimming pool.

Most projects do not need permits and plans, including:

- Gardening or landscaping at home.
- Installing a fence, post or sign (a building permit may be required).
- Digging for individual sewer or water connections.

### **What should you do before you dig?**

If you think you may disturb 2,500 square feet of land or more, follow these simple steps:

- Check whether you need a site permit and grading plan.
- Check whether your property is located in a Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area; development is limited in these areas.



Contact Fairfax County’s Site Permits Branch at 703-324-1510, TTY 711 to find out if you need a permit and grading plan or if your property is in a protection area. Also call Miss Utility at 811, TTY 711, before you start digging, so you know where utility lines are buried in your property.

### **What does soil erosion cost you?**

- It could cause drainage or flooding problems for your home or your neighbors.
- Treating drinking water is more expensive and complicated.
- Sediment increases the growth of bacteria in water, posing a risk to swimmers, livestock and wildlife.
- Tax dollars must be used to pay for cleaning up clogged storm drainage systems that can cause flooding.
- More money must be spent to protect the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay.



### **What are clues to possible illegal land disturbance?**

- The activity takes place before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m. or on weekends.
- There is no company name on the construction vehicles or equipment.
- There is no advertising sign for the construction company doing the work at the site.
- The land is being cleared without surveyor’s flags on trees.
- There is no construction entrance next to the road (eg. an area of stone and gravel placed to keep mud off of streets).

### **What should you do if you see potentially illegal digging, filling or clearing?**

Call the county’s 24-hour environmental hotline at 703-324-1937, TTY 711. The best time to call is when you first see signs of any suspicious activity. Be sure to provide a street address, so inspectors know which property to investigate.

Here are some additional tips:

- Never challenge the property owner or construction company. They may have a permit and be acting legally.
- Never trespass onto private property.
- Always gather as much information as possible — such as dates, times, license plate numbers and states, and descriptions of who, what, where and when.



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For more information or to request this information in an alternate format, contact Fairfax County's Environmental Inspections and Facilities Division of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services at 703-324-1950, TTY 711, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 334, Fairfax, VA 22035.