



Accessory Structures in the FEMA Floodplain

Quick guide for sheds, detached garages, carports, pole barns, and similar structures in Berea.

Detached accessory structures in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) are regulated by FEMA/NFIP standards and the City of Berea. In Berea, there are generally two compliance paths depending on the design and site conditions.

Two Paths in Berea

1. Elevated option. Elevate and anchor the structure and utilities at least 2 feet above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE), consistent with local floodplain requirements.

2. At-grade option. Apply for a local floodplain variance and meet wet-floodproofing requirements. This path is typically limited to qualifying accessory structures with low flood-damage potential.

At-Grade / Variance Conditions

- Same parcel as the principal structure, with a use incidental to the main building.
- Parking or limited storage only - not for living space, sleeping, or routine occupancy.
- Small, low-cost structure with minimal investment and low flood-damage potential.
- Constructed with flood-damage-resistant materials to 2 feet above the BFE.
- Mechanical, electrical, and utility equipment elevated or otherwise protected to the required elevation.
- Adequately anchored to resist flotation, collapse, and lateral movement.
- Must not create floodway encroachments, raise flood heights, or divert flood flows.
- Cannot be converted later to a different or habitable use.

Not every site or structure will qualify. Stream location, floodway impacts, fill, utilities, size, and intended use all matter.

Common Examples

- Detached garages
- Carports
- Storage sheds
- Pole barns / hay sheds

Flood Openings

- Minimum 2 openings on at least 2 walls
- At least 1 sq. in. of net open area per sq. ft. of enclosed area
- Bottom of openings no higher than 1 foot above the higher of interior or exterior grade/floor immediately below
- Must allow automatic entry and exit of floodwater

Before You Build

- Contact the City early for flood zone, floodway, and BFE information
- A surveyor may be needed to confirm grade and elevation information
- A variance is not automatic and may require recorded restrictions or a non-conversion agreement
- Local permits are still required even when FEMA/NFIP conditions are met

Important: General guidance only; site-specific review, survey, permit review, or variance action may still be required.

Sources: Berea Chapter 75 and FEMA guidance on accessory structures, flood openings, wet floodproofing, materials, and variances.

Questions?

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