



**SAN JUAN COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING**

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POLICIES / PROCEDURES / INTERPRETATIONS

UNGRADED LUMBER

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DEPUTY BUILDING OFFICIAL**

**POLICY #: BP-2013-03
ISSUED: 6/20/2013**

ISSUE:

An existing SJC CDP policy memo describes conditions where the use of ungraded lumber would be allowed for use as structural members in the construction of a single family residence. [1] This policy deserves review, update and clarification as necessary in an effort to maximize the utility of local timber resources.

ANALYSIS:

The following statement was excerpted from the old department policy memo: [1]

“It is the policy of the CD&P to allow rough-cut lumber in the construction of single family dwellings and accessory structures provided that all horizontal members are at least one size larger than required in the Western Lumber Span Tables based on grade number 2 for the size, span and distance between members.”

The unique geography of the Islands provides a micro climate significantly different from our mainland counterparts, most notably rainfall, with the Islands receiving less than half of the annual rainfall of nearby mainland areas. In terms of tree growth and lumber strength, less rainfall equates directly to slower growth, tighter growth rings, and consequently (beneficially), stronger lumber when harvested from said trees.

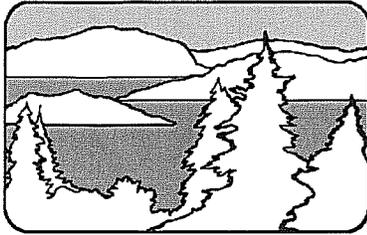
Local lumber is harvested in many locations on the islands and provides an excellent source of construction material when milled to size. The building codes require lumber to be provided with a grade mark from an approved grading agency. The expense of lumber grading precludes small batch harvests from being fully utilized as a building material.

POLICY:

San Juan County CDP shall allow the use of sound, local (*harvested within San Juan County*), ungraded lumber for structural members in the construction of 1 and 2 family dwellings and their accessory structures under any of the following conditions:

1. Beams, girders, joists, columns and other vertical and horizontal structural members shall be at least one size larger than required in the International Residential Code (IRC) and the National Design Standard (American Wood Council publication). For the purpose of this policy, *“one size larger”* will mean an increase in the depth of the member to the next nominal size. (Example: if a 2x6 is required, an ungraded member is allowed if upsized to 2x8)
2. A licensed Architect or Engineer in the State of Washington may specify the use of ungraded lumber provided they:
 - Are the designer of record for the project/structure in which the member is being used
 - Specify the species and size of the member to be used
 - Affix their professional stamp/seal for the approval of ungraded member(s) on permit documents
3. Ungraded wall studs for exterior and interior bearing walls and for exterior non-bearing walls are allowed when sized one size larger than what is otherwise required for graded wall studs.
4. Ungraded wall studs for interior non-bearing walls are allowed as permitted for graded wall studs.
5. Defects in ungraded lumber shall be considered consistent with cutting, boring, or notching limits imposed by the IRC. Defects that do not comply with these limits shall deem the ungraded wood member un-sound and would not be permitted for use as a structural member.
6. Any location requiring the use of pressure treated or naturally durable wood shall conform to the requirements set forth in the appropriate code sections.

[1] San Juan County Policy Memo on use of Ungraded Lumber (Attached)



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MEMO

Subject: Ungraded Lumber

In April of 1997, the CD&P Director, prepared a letter in response to a question regarding the use of ungraded, rough cut lumber. The following is an excerpt from this letter.

“It is the policy of the CD&P to allow rough-cut lumber in the construction of single family dwellings and accessory structures provided that all horizontal members are at least one size larger than required in the *Western Lumber Span Tables* based on grade number 2 for the size, span, and distance between members.”

“In applying this policy to your construction project, and assuming you are using Douglas Fir with floor joists that must span twelve feet, a 2 x 8 member would be required. If you want to use ungraded rough-cut members, they would have to be a minimum of 2 x 10.”

In applying this policy to beams, girders, or headers, horizontal member must be at least one size larger than required in the Uniform Building Code and National Design Standards. Calculation may be required to show what minimums are so that it can be verified you have used the proper size member.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the CD&P (360) 378-2116.