VALLEY COUNTY FIRE PREVENTION

Cascade, Donnelly, and McCall Fire Districts

RESIDENTIAL DRIVEWAY FIRE ACCESS

APPLICANT GUIDE

Purpose. This guide summarizes the residential driveway features commonly reviewed for emergency vehicle access. It is intended to help homeowners, builders, contractors, designers, and developers plan access correctly before construction.

Start with the site plan. Before driveway or building construction begins, submit a plan showing the driveway information identified in the separate Valley County Residential Driveway - Site Plan Requirements handout.

Quick Reference

WIDTH	12 ft minimum unobstructed driving width.
HEIGHT	13 ft 6 in minimum unobstructed vertical clearance.
GRADE	10% maximum driveway grade unless approved by the fire code official. City of McCall projects also require a 5 ft landing at the street with a maximum 6% grade.
SURFACE	All-weather driving surface capable of supporting local responding fire apparatus.
TURNAROUND	Required for driveways over 150 ft. Minimum turning radii: 30 ft inside / 45 ft outside.
TURNOUTS	May be required on driveways over 200 ft and less than 20 ft wide, and where sight-distance limitations make safe vehicle passage difficult.
ADDRESS	Driveway address identification must be installed at the beginning of construction and remain visible and legible.
ACCESS	Required fire apparatus access must be in place and accessible before vertical construction and maintained throughout construction.

1. Plan the Driveway for Fire Apparatus Access

Driveway width and clearance. Maintain at least 12 feet of unobstructed driving width and 13 feet 6 inches of unobstructed vertical clearance. Trees, branches, utility lines, gates, snow storage, retaining walls, parked vehicles, and other obstructions should not reduce the required access.

Grade. The driveway grade may not exceed 10% unless an alternate grade is approved by the fire code official. Within the City of McCall, the driveway must also include a 5-foot landing where it meets a public or private street, with a maximum landing grade of 6%.

Driving surface. Provide an all-weather surface that remains usable by heavy emergency vehicles. Gravel may be acceptable when properly constructed and maintained. The driveway must support the imposed loads of local responding fire apparatus.

2. Long Driveways Need Apparatus Maneuvering Space

Turnarounds. A driveway longer than 150 feet must provide a turnaround. The turnaround must allow fire apparatus to turn without backing the full length of the driveway. Required turning radii are at least 30 feet inside and 45 feet outside.

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- IFC Appendix D, Figure D103.1 may be used as a reference for common turnaround configurations such as a cul-de-sac, 60-foot Y, or hammerhead. Residential driveway width requirements still apply.
- For Valley County projects, applicable driveway turnarounds are specifically required by County code to meet IFC Appendix D103.4.

Turnouts. For long, narrow driveways, the fire district may require areas where vehicles can safely pass. Turnouts may be needed when a driveway is over 200 feet long and less than 20 feet wide or when curves, terrain, vegetation, or other features obstruct the line of sight. When required under the Idaho driveway provisions, a turnout has an all-weather surface at least 10 feet wide by 30 feet long.

3. Bridges, Gates, and Shared Driveways

Bridges and elevated structures. Identify any bridge or elevated structure on the access route during plan review. Bridge load limits must be posted at both entrances, and the fire code official sets the applicable bridge design load. The fire district may request structural or load-rating information when necessary to verify apparatus access.

Gates. A gate crossing the required fire apparatus access route must have an approved means of emergency operation and must remain operational. Show the gate location and type on the site plan so emergency access can be reviewed before installation.

Shared driveways. Notify corresponding fire district when a driveway will serve more than one residence. Additional City or County shared-access, easement, maintenance, or development requirements may apply based on the project's jurisdiction and number of residences served.

4. Addressing Is Part of Fire Access

- Post the driveway address at the beginning of construction and maintain it thereafter.
- The address must be visible and legible from the road and visible from both directions of travel.
- When one driveway serves multiple addresses, post the addresses together at the entrance and provide additional identification where the driveway divides.

5. Access Must Be Ready Before Building Construction

Before vertical construction begins, the required driveway/fire apparatus access and addressing must be installed, approved, and accessible to emergency vehicles. Keep the access usable throughout construction.

- Do not allow construction materials, equipment, excavation, mud, snow, or parked vehicles to block the required access.
- If the approved driveway design changes during construction, contact the fire district before constructing the change.

6. What to Submit to the District

Use the Valley County Fire Prevention Residential Driveway - Site Plan Requirements handout. The site plan should show the information necessary to verify the proposed access, including:

- Driveway length, minimum width, and maximum grade.
- Driving surface and vertical-clearance information.
- Turnaround type, dimensions, and turning radii; turnouts when applicable.
- Any bridge/elevated structure or gate.
- Address-sign location, residence location, and the complete access route.

Tip: Providing this information on the initial site plan is usually the fastest way to avoid a correction request and keep the fire-access review moving.

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7. City of McCall and Valley County Notes

City of McCall. In addition to the fire-access criteria above, City code generally limits a single-family driveway to 12-20 feet in width, includes the street-landing grade requirement described above, and contains specific rules for shared residential driveways. A City Public Works permit is required for a driveway connecting to a public street or way.

Valley County. County code requires an approach permit for access onto County public right-of-way. For driveway plans or constructed driveways over 150 feet from an access road, County code requires approval by the appropriate fire code official or assigns before issuance of a building permit and identifies the fire-access criteria summarized in this guide.

Questions or Unusual Site Conditions?

Contact your corresponding fire district early in the design process when a site has steep terrain, a bridge, a gate, limited turnaround space, unusual access geometry, or another condition that may affect emergency vehicle access. Early review is generally easier than redesigning a driveway after construction has started.

Contacts:

Cascade Fire Protection District: Chief Steve Hull, (208) 382-3200, steve@cascaderuralfire.com

Donnelly Fire Protection District: Fire Marshall Jerry Holenbeck, (208) 849-2438, firemarshal@donnellyfire.net

McCall Fire Protection District: Fire Prevention Officer, Ryan Garber, (208) 469-0135, ryan@mccallfire.com

Primary references: IDAPA 18.08.01 / IFC §503.7 through §503.7.8; Valley County Code §6-1-9(E); City of McCall Code §§3.8.064 and 9.6.03.
This applicant guide is a practical summary and does not supersede applicable state law, adopted fire code, or local ordinance. The currently adopted governing provision controls if a conflict exists.