



# Film Permit Frequently Asked Questions

County of Ventura · Resource Management Agency · Planning Division

800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009-1740 • (805) 654-2457 • <https://www.vcrma.org/film-permits>

If you are filming in the unincorporated areas of Ventura County, you will need to submit a film permit application and obtain a film permit for your production. This FAQ Fact Sheet provides answers to frequently asked questions to help you understand the County of Ventura's film permit process.

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## **When to Apply** [Top](#)

### ***Why do I need to apply for a Film Permit?*** [Top](#)

Ventura County land use is regulated by two zoning ordinances: the Coastal Zoning Ordinance (for structures and uses within the coastal zone) and the Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance (for structures and uses outside of the coastal zone). Filming is an allowed use in the zoning ordinances, subject to standards and thresholds. The Coastal or the Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance will apply based on the location of the production.

### ***What is the difference between a discretionary and a ministerial film permit?*** [Top](#)

The majority of film permits in Ventura County can be issued “over-the-counter” with a ministerial zoning clearance. This is as long as the production meets the standards for a ministerial film permit as outlined in Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance Section 8107-11 and Coastal Zoning Ordinance Section 8175-5.6.

When the filming activity exceeds the thresholds outlined in the ordinances, a production can apply for a discretionary permit. Discretionary permits are subject to an environmental review and public hearing. For more information on required application materials and the County’s discretionary permit process, visit the Planning Division website [here](#).

Filming activities that will likely require a discretionary film permit in the Non-Coastal Zone include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Filming that exceeds 90 days (including prep and strike)
- Filming that results in more than 50 cubic feet of grading
- Filming that will result in impacts to fauna or flora

### ***When do I need to apply for a Film Permit?*** [Top](#)

If you are filming in the unincorporated areas of Ventura County (including on private property) and your project consists of any of the following, a film permit must be obtained:

- Commercials
- Documentary
- Feature Film
- Infomercial
- Music Video
- Photo Still
- Public Service Announcement
- Televised Live Sporting Event
- TV Series
- TV Movie

- TV Pilot
- Web Production or Series

Filming for personal use such as family events, weddings, graduations, parties, and other holiday activities are exempt from obtaining a film permit.

Student film productions may be exempt but are required to contact the Film Permit Coordinator regarding their production. The Film Permit Coordinator will determine if the student production is exempt from obtaining a film permit. Please see the student film section below to determine if a student film production qualifies for an exemption.

***Does my filming location allow the issuance of a film permit?*** [Top](#)

A film permit can be issued for a property/filming location if it meets all three of the requirements below:

**1. The property's zoning allows the issuance of a film permit.**

Some properties have zoning that does not allow the issuance of a film permit or a film permit with waivers. Some zoning limits filming to no more than 14 days (e.g., coastal zones), unless applying for a discretionary permit. To find out the zoning for a specific film location, use the [County GIS tool](#). Then contact the Film Permit Coordinator to see what type of film permit, if any, is allowed in your zone.

**2. The property is located on a legal lot.**

The State Subdivision Map Act, and Ventura County Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances prohibit the issuance of any permits on lots that are illegally subdivided. Therefore, prior to the issuance of a permit or other entitlement, the County must determine whether the lot is legally created.

Note: The assignment of a tax assessor parcel number and the payment of property taxes does not guarantee that the parcel is legal. For example, the legality of a lot may be affected by the way the lot was created (deed, lease, map, etc.). County staff at the Planning counter can provide information on whether the parcel in question is known to be legal, may be illegal, or provide assistance when not enough information is known to make a determination on the legal lot status.

For more information on legal lots, review the [legal lot program](#) webpage.

**3. The property has no active violations.**

A film permit will not be issued if any of the proposed filming locations are on a property where an active violation exists. All violations must be abated prior to issuance of a film permit. For more information on how to abate a code violation,

contact the enforcement agency listed on the property owner's Notice of Violation.

## Application Process [Top](#)

### ***How long does it take to obtain a film permit?*** [Top](#)

Requests for filming in the unincorporated area of Ventura County should be made at least **three business days** prior to the start of filming activities, and at least **one week** for requests in which waivers are required. An incomplete application (i.e., an application missing a signed owner's authorization or a site map) may be submitted for early review. However, a film permit will not be issued until all sections of the application are complete and all required documents have been uploaded to [Citizens Access](#).

Note: Discretionary film permits require far more time to process due to requirements to prepare a staff report, complete environmental review, and hold at least one public hearing.

### ***When would I apply for a film permit with waivers?*** [Top](#)

A film permit "with waivers" is required when filming activities in the non-coastal areas of the County exceed any of the following thresholds:

- After hours filming activities before 7:00 a.m. or after 10:00 p.m.;
- Excessive noise (e.g., explosions, gunfire, aircraft), light, glare, or dust exceeding that which is normal for the area, except when the nearest residence is more than 2,000 feet from the noise source;
- Cumulative filming activity exceeds a total of 60 days on any lot within a 180-day period (this includes all filming, prep, and strike days, even if for different productions);
- Cause traffic delays of more than three minutes on public or private roads; or,
- Other thresholds listed in Section 8107-11.1 of the *Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance*.

Filming in the Coastal Zone has similar but slightly more restrictive thresholds used to evaluate the need to obtain a film permit with waivers. A film permit "with waivers" is required when filming activities in the coastal areas of the County exceed any of the following thresholds:

- After hours filming activities between the hours of 10:00 PM to 7:00 AM during the week or between 8:00 PM to 8:00 AM on the weekend;

- Excessive noise (e.g., explosions, gunfire, aircraft), light, glare, or dust exceeding that which is normal for the area, except when the nearest residence is more than 2,000 feet from the noise source;
- Cause traffic delays of more than three minutes on public or private roads;
- Will be less than 14 days;
- Will not impact Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA); or
- Other thresholds listed in Section 8175-5.6 of the *Ventura County Coastal Zoning Ordinance*.

Click [here](#) to determine whether your filming location falls within the Non-Coastal Zone or the Coastal Zone.

When waivers are required, the film production will need to obtain fifty percent plus one (50%+1) approval from the residents in nearby homes which may be impacted by the filming activities. The “waiver” process is in lieu of a much longer Conditional Use Permit process which might normally be required when these thresholds are exceeded. Some properties have zoning that does not allow the issuance of a film permit with waivers. In these areas, filming cannot exceed the above thresholds.

A waiver attestation form will need to be signed by the film Production Manager attesting that film permit waiver statement forms for this production have been truthfully, legitimately collected, and represent the true signatures of residents or animal caretakers at the address listed. This form may not be signed by representatives of film permit expediting firms or consultants hired by the production company to canvas the neighborhood for signatures.

You can download the full Film Permit Waiver Instructions at this [link](#).

### **What do I include in a film permit application? [Top](#)**

The film permit application must include the following items or it cannot be processed:

1. A completed [Ventura County Film Permit application](#) (including a detailed description of filming activities, all assessor parcel numbers of all filming locations, completed questionnaire, etc.).
2. A site map ([sample](#)) that indicates the specific assessor parcel numbers (APNs) to be used on the property and the parcel boundaries. The APNs are important because many unincorporated properties have several APNs that form one legal lot. The parcel boundaries are important because they indicate the boundaries of the parcel ownership. The site map should clearly indicate where parking, base camp and filming locations will be on the property.
3. An Owner’s Authorization signed by the property owner for each location (Note: If an agent is signing on behalf of the property owner there must be an agent authorization form on file with the Planning Division signed by the property owner.)
4. The Film Permit Application Fee (see [Fees Section](#) for more information).

### **What happens after my application is submitted? [Top](#)**

After your application is submitted through the County's [Citizen's Access](#) portal, Planning Staff will be notified of the new application. Staff will perform an initial review of the application and forward copies of the application to other relevant County departments (e.g., Public Works Agency, Animal Control Services, Fire District, Environmental Health, etc.) and the remaining film permit fees will be assessed. Planning Staff will contact you directly if additional information is required to process your application. The status of your application can be checked in [Citizens Access](#) at any time. Other questions related to your application can be directed to the Film Permit Coordinator on duty at [film.permits@ventura.org](mailto:film.permits@ventura.org).

***What if I need to make changes after I submitted my permit?*** [Top](#)

Once the application has been submitted, any changes must be made by the Film Permit Coordinator. Contact the Film Permit Coordinator at [film.permits@ventura.org](mailto:film.permits@ventura.org).

***How will I receive my approved film permit?*** [Top](#)

Once approved, you will receive an email notification that a film permit has been issued. The Film Permit Coordinator will email a copy of the approved film permit to the applicant. A copy of the approved permit will also appear in the documents section of your permit application and can be accessed at any time through Citizen's Access.

**Forms** [Top](#)

***Do I need insurance to film in Ventura County?*** [Top](#)

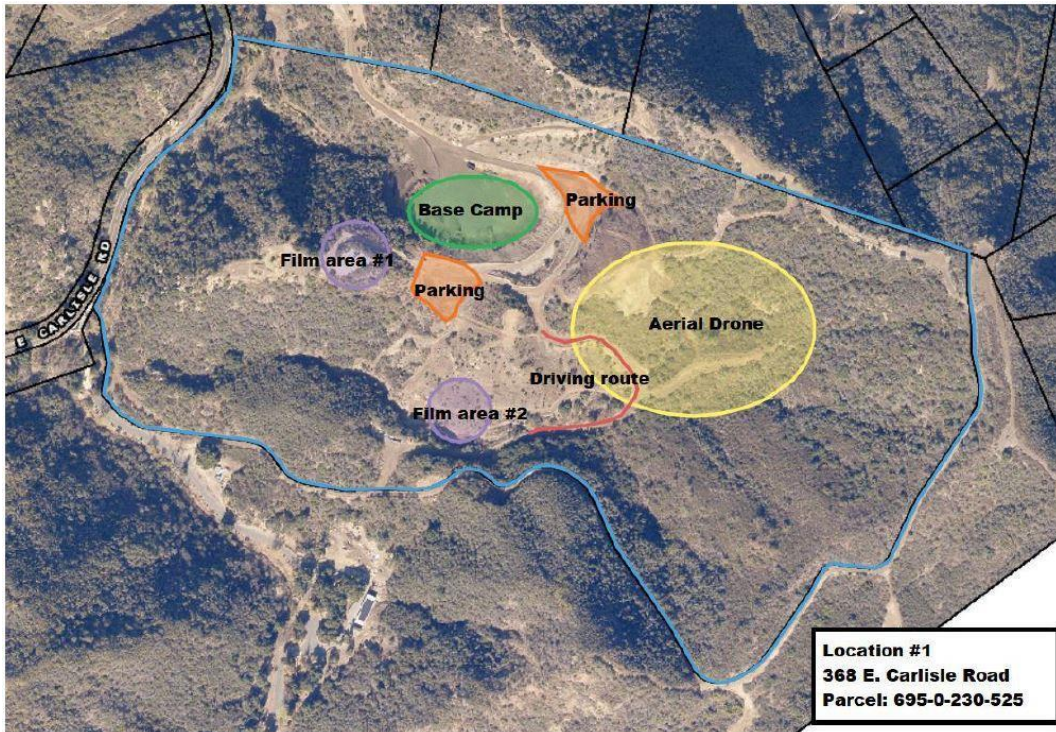
The County of Ventura Planning Division does not require the production company to provide insurance if filming is on private property.

However, insurance may be required by other County agencies if filming on County owned properties operated by the General Services Agency, by Ventura County Parks, or when filming on County roads and right-of ways. The Public Works Transportation Department requires proof of insurance. Please contact staff at these agencies for more information on their insurance requirements. The General Services Agency can be reached at (805) 477-7187, Ventura County Parks can be reached at (805) 654-3968, and Transportation Department can be reached at (805) 654-2055.

***What is a site map?*** [Top](#)

A site map is an aerial image of the filming location. All filming activities (i.e., base camp, parking, filming areas, etc.) must be indicated on the site map. Please label the Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) for each parcel in use. To find the APN(s) of a property and create a map, visit the [County View](#) mapping application. A tutorial can be found [here](#).

### Sample Site Map



### ***What is a Property Owner Authorization Form?*** [Top](#)

For film permit applications, the property owner must sign the owner's authorization form (not the resident), unless the property owner designates an agent (see the agent authorization form section). The form is available [here](#).

### ***What is an Agent Authorization Form?*** [Top](#)

For film permit applications, the property owner must sign the owner's authorization form (not the resident), unless the property owner designates an agent. To sign on behalf of the property owner, the agent will need to complete the agent authorization form. The agent authorization form is available [here](#). In addition to the original agent authorization form, a copy of the property owner's driver's license or notarization is required. This form will be kept on file by the Planning Division. It is the responsibility of the property owner to notify the Planning Division if they would like to terminate or replace an authorized agent.

### ***How do I obtain a W-9 Tax Form?*** [Top](#)

Requests for W-9 tax forms can be made to the Film Permit Coordinator. The form will be emailed to the applicant or production company.

### ***How do I obtain a Business License for filming?*** [Top](#)

A business tax certificate is the equivalent of a business license and is required as part of the Planning Film Permit process. It is issued by the County Tax Collector. The County Tax Collector can be reached by telephone at (805) 654-3727 or by email at [tax.collector@ventura.org](mailto:tax.collector@ventura.org). The Planning Division collects fees for the business license during the film permit process.

## **Fees** [Top](#)

### ***How much does a film permit cost in Ventura County?*** [Top](#)

The Planning Division assesses film permit fees and collects some fees for other departments. All fees are nonrefundable unless collected in error. You can find more information on the film permit fees [here](#). All productions are subject to a location fee, fire review fee, and daily business license fee. Productions may be subject to additional fees such as an animal review fee by the Ventura County Animal Services Department. Paying online by credit or debit card incurs a 2.15% convenience fee due to the service being provided by a third-party vendor.

Ventura County provides a fee calculator for applicants to estimate the cost of the film permit. The fee calculator is available [here](#).

### ***How do I obtain an invoice?*** [Top](#)

The invoice will be available to view on the [Citizen's Access](#) portal. By navigating through the "Fees" tab you can track your payment history and print receipts. You can also email the Film Permit Coordinator at [Film.Permits@Ventura.org](mailto:Film.Permits@Ventura.org) to request a copy of the invoice.

### ***How do I pay the film permit fees?*** [Top](#)

The Film Permit Application Fee must be paid at the time of submittal. Payment can be made in the form of a credit card payment online, cash, or by check payable to the "County of Ventura." Please include the film permit number on the check. Paying online by credit or debit card incurs a 2.15% convenience fee.



After the Film Permit Application has been submitted to the Planning Division and reviewed, the Film Permit Coordinator will assess additional fees including the location fee, fire review fee, business license fee, and any other applicable fees. All fees must be paid prior to the issuance of a Film Permit.

To mail in payment, please note that it must arrive before the first prep or film date (whichever is earlier). Mail the payment to the following address:

**County of Ventura**  
**Attn: Film Permits Coordinator - Planning Division**  
**800 S. Victoria Ave. L#1740**  
**Ventura, CA 93009**

To drop off payment, visit the Planning Division in the Hall of Administration at the Ventura County Government Center ([location](#)). Payment can be dropped off at the Planning Counter between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

## Other Questions [Top](#)

### *What do I need to film on County roads or right-of-ways?* [Top](#)

Filming on any road owned and maintained by the County of Ventura requires an [Encroachment Permit](#) from the Transportation Division. Please contact the Public Works Transportation staff at [PWA.Transpermits@ventura.org](mailto:PWA.Transpermits@ventura.org) or (805) 654-2055 for more information. All Encroachment Permits will require a base camp located on private property. It is recommended that applications for Encroachment permits be submitted at least 7 days prior to filming.

Filming that takes place solely on County roads located within the Non-Coastal Zone do not require a film permit from the Planning Division. However, if the base camp is in unincorporated Ventura County, a film permit must be obtained for the base camp.

Filming on County roads located within the Coastal Zone require a film permit from the Planning Division. To find out the zoning for a specific film location, use the [County GIS tool](#). Contact the Film Permit Coordinator if assistance is needed in determining whether the film location is in the Coastal Zone or Non-Coastal Zone.

Applicants may also call the California State Film Commission to request local law enforcement to conduct ITC (Intermittent Traffic Control) and full road closures at (323) 817-4104 or (213) 703-2070.

Caltrans will be the permitting authority over freeways. To apply for a Caltrans permit, click [here](#). This [service](#) is used to see where Caltrans has jurisdiction. First, find your film location, then click on the map for a pin to be dropped highlighting the nearest Caltrans permitted right of way.

### **What do I need for a drone?** [Top](#)

Filming with a drone requires the submittal of drone pilot license and designation of the flight path on the site map. If the drone is flying in air space regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the FAA flight plan of activities must also be submitted.

### **When do I need to post a Residential Filming Notification Sign during filming?** [Top](#)

All film permits at locations with a zoning designation of residential and with a 20,000 square foot minimum lot area (or less), are required to post a [Residential Filming Notification Sign](#) during all filming activity. To determine applicability, please ask the Film Permit Coordinator for the zoning designation on any potential film sites. The purpose is to provide contact information for a Location Manager at residential film sites in a clearly visible location to the public and surrounding community while film activity is in progress. This includes prep, filming, and strike activities.

The fillable 8 ½ x 11 inch printable template is to be staked within 5 feet of the property frontage and adjacent to the front driveway. Metal or wood stakes in the ground may be used with the sign securely attached. The sign is to have a height of no less than 4 feet and no more than 6 feet. Where there is a tree within 5 ft of the property frontage that allows the sign to be viewed by passersby, the sign may be attached to the tree with ties. It's preferable to print the sign on neon colored paper to make it eye-catching.

The signature and phone number of the Film Location Manager are required on the sign. Once printed, the filming notification sign is to be inserted into a plastic sheet protector or laminated to protect it from inclement weather during filming activities. If damaged, the sign is to be replaced until film activities are concluded. A photograph of the posted filming notification sign is required to be emailed to the Film Permit Coordinator prior to commencing filming prep on the site.

### **Do I need a Fire Safety Officer (FSO)?** [Top](#)

The Ventura County Fire District requires that all film permit applications be reviewed. The applicant must contact Lori Ross, Filming Fire Safety Coordinator, at (805) 947-8535 prior to the submittal of a film permit application.

The Filming Fire Safety Coordinator will determine if a Fire Safety Officer (FSO) will be assigned to a production. For more information on the Fire District fees, download the Ventura County Fire District Questionnaire for Filming [here](#). Fees for the Fire District's review will be collected on their behalf by the Planning Division with your Planning film permit application. However, if the Fire District determines that a Fire Code permit or a FSO will be needed, this permit will be initiated and paid separately through the Filming Fire Safety Coordinator.

### **Do I need a film permit for a student film?** [Top](#)

No, unless it would require signed waivers or a discretionary permit subject to an environmental review and public hearing. Student productions are exempt if they meet the criteria for a standard permit and are eligible to receive an Exemption Letter. If a permit is required, the County will not waive Planning fees associated with permit review.

You may be exempt from receiving a Ventura County Film Permit from the Planning Division if you satisfy the following criteria and the production is exclusively located in the Non-Coastal Zone:

- a) You are currently enrolled as a student at an accredited film school; and,
- b) You are filming a production related to coursework; and,
- c) Your production (including prep, film, and strike) will not occur between the hours of 10:00 PM to 7:00 AM; and,
- d) Your production will not generate an excessive amount of noise, dust, or light that exceeds that which is normal for the area; and,
- e) Your film will not be used for commercial purposes.

You may be exempt from receiving a Ventura County Film Permit from the Planning Division if you meet the following criteria and the production is exclusively located in the Coastal Zone:

- a) You are currently enrolled as a student at an accredited film school; and,
- b) You are filming a production related to coursework; and,
- c) Your production (including prep, film, and strike) will not occur between the hours of 10:00 PM to 7:00 AM during the week or between 8:00 PM to 8:00 AM on the weekend; and,
- d) Your production will not generate an excessive amount of noise, dust, or light that exceeds that which is normal for the area; and,
- e) Your production will be less than 14 days; and,
- f) Your production will not impact Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA); and,
- g) Your production will not require Neighborhood Consent forms;
- h) Your production will not exceed other standard film permit thresholds as outlined in *Coastal Zoning Ordinance Section 8175-5.6*; and,
- i) Your film will not be used for commercial purposes.

Please note that you may still be subject to fees from other County departments or agencies. If a student production is found to be operating outside of the scope of work detailed in their exemption letter, or there are compliance issues, the student and/or the school may be subject to paying all associated review fees. Productions that exceed the thresholds of a standard permit will not be exempt from a Planning film permit and will be subject to other permit approvals and requirements.

Students are required to contact other related agencies, such as the Ventura County Fire District, Environmental Health Division, and the Transportation Division to verify whether a permit is required for student-related filming activities.

***How do I make changes to an approved film permit (apply for a Film Permit Amendment)?*** [Top](#)

After a film permit has been issued, minor aspects of the original film permit may be amended if related to the production from the original film permit.

Examples of minor amendments:

- Extending the production hours.
- Changing the production schedule; adding or removing prep/film/strike days
- Shifting the production schedule (e.g., moving the entire project back one week).
- Changing or adding new activity that may trigger a need to obtain permits from other agencies (e.g., Fire Permit, Encroachment Permit, etc.)
- Other circumstances that the Film Permit Coordinator concludes would be acceptable prior to an application being approved.

You can submit a permit amendment through Citizen's Access [here](#).

***How do I contact the Ventura County Film Permit Coordinator?*** [Top](#)

County of Ventura Planning Division  
Film Permit Coordinator  
800 S. Victoria Ave, L#1740  
Ventura, CA. 93009  
(805) 654-2457  
[film.permits@ventura.org](mailto:film.permits@ventura.org)

Film Permit website: <https://vcrma.org/en/film-permits>