



# Wood and Masonry Fences

CITY OF SAN DIEGO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
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The Construction of masonry or wood fences, six feet or less in height and not supporting any other super-imposed loads such as those resulting from the self weight of chain link fences, glass panels, etc, does not require a construction permit from the City of San Diego, Development Services Department. However, their construction and location is regulated by the California Building Code as amended by the City of San Diego. This information bulletin outlines the City's requirements. For specific information about the fence zoning regulations on your lot, call Information and Application Services Division at (619) 446-5000.

**Documents Referenced in this Information Bulletin**

- San Diego Municipal Code, (SDMC)
- Information Bulletin 221, Minimum Requirements for Retaining Wall/Level Backfill
- Information Bulletin 222, Minimum Requirements for Retaining Wall/Sloping Backfill

**I. FENCE HEIGHT PER SDMC**

Fence heights are also regulated by the zoning laws of the City. Fence height is measured from the lowest grade abutting the fence to the top of the fence, except that the height of a fence on top of a retaining wall is measured from the grade on the higher side of the retaining wall. (SDMC 113.0270(b)(1)(A)).

**II. DESIGN CRITERIA**

Material requirements in Table A are based on the following design criteria:

1. Wind speed 85 MPH, Exposure C.
2. Seismic Design Category D.
3. Soil bearing pressure is 1,500 psf minimum.
4. For the purpose of the structural design, wall height shall be measured from the top of the footing to the top of the wall.
5. Footing depth shall be 24 inches below finish grade and 12 inches of compacted soil is required on top of footing to stabilize the wall.
6. For zoning requirements fence height shall be measured from finish grade.

If the design criteria are different table values must be adjusted.

**III. ZONING REGULATIONS**

San Diego Municipal Code Chapter 14 Article 2 Division 3 regulates the location and the height of the fences in the required setbacks and in the visibility area as follows:

1. Solid fences and standard all metal chain link fences (open fences), located on the front or street side property line, shall not exceed 3 feet in height except as provided in Section 142.0310(c)(1)(C) of the SDMC.
2. Fences located in required side yards and required rear yards are permitted up to 9 feet in height. Any portion of the fence above 6 feet in height shall be an open fence.

3. Fences in visibility areas shall not exceed 3 feet in height.

**IV. WOOD/CHAIN LINK FENCES**

Details for typical wood panel lock fences, board fences, and chain link fences are shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

Additional requirements are noted below:

- A. Wood posts shall be of naturally durable or preservative-treated wood (CBC 2304.11.2.7). Wood posts shall be No. 2 foundation-grade redwood, or pressure-treated Douglas fir-larch No. 2 or better.
- B. Preservative treatment must be applied to the ends of wood posts buried in the ground.
- C. Set posts/pipes in 12-inch diameter concrete footings extending at least 24 inches into undisturbed natural ground or properly compacted fill. Footings must be placed over 3 inches of loose gravel. Wood posts must extend through concrete footings to gravel below.
- D. Structures located in Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, governed by Chapter 7A of the California Building Code, or Brush Management Zones, governed by the City of San Diego's Brush Management Ordinance, may need to meet additional fire protection requirements.

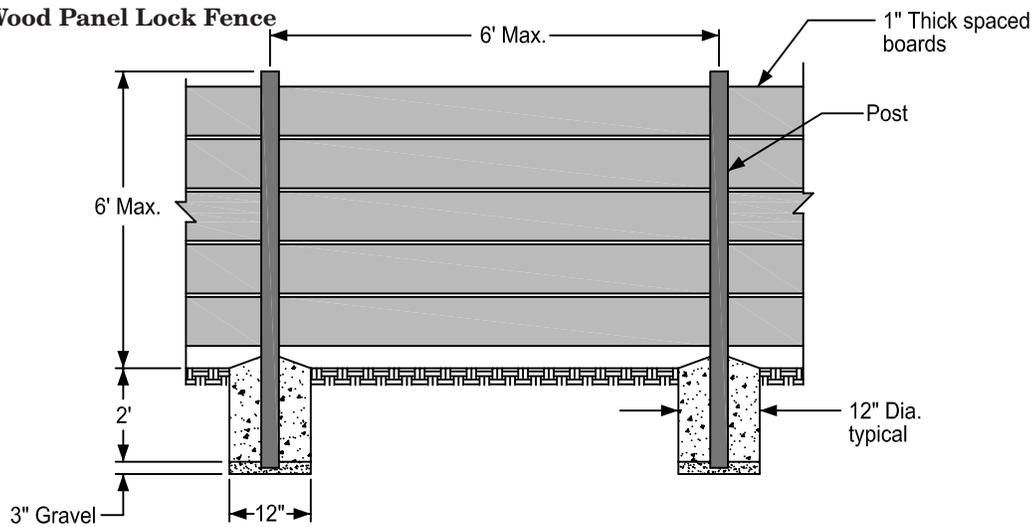
**IV. CHAIN LINK FENCES**

This information bulletin does not address the design of the metal chain link fence and the supporting metal posts. Sizes and spacing should follow manufactures installation specifications. Figure 3 shows footing requirements for chain link fence not more than 6 feet in height.

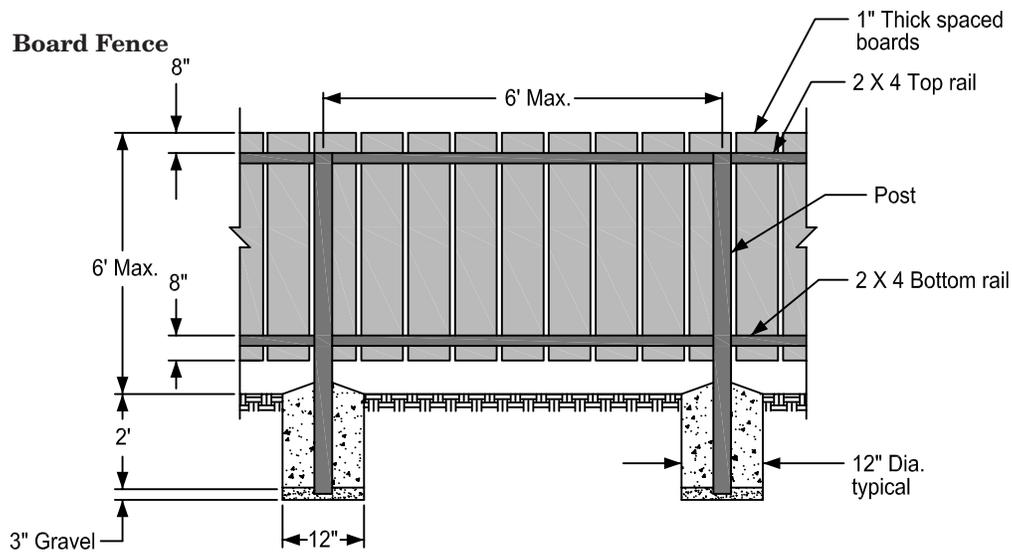
**V. MASONRY FENCES**

Table A contains dimensional requirements for masonry fences and footings. All footings must extend at least 12 inches into undisturbed natu-

**Figure 1 / Wood Panel Lock Fence**

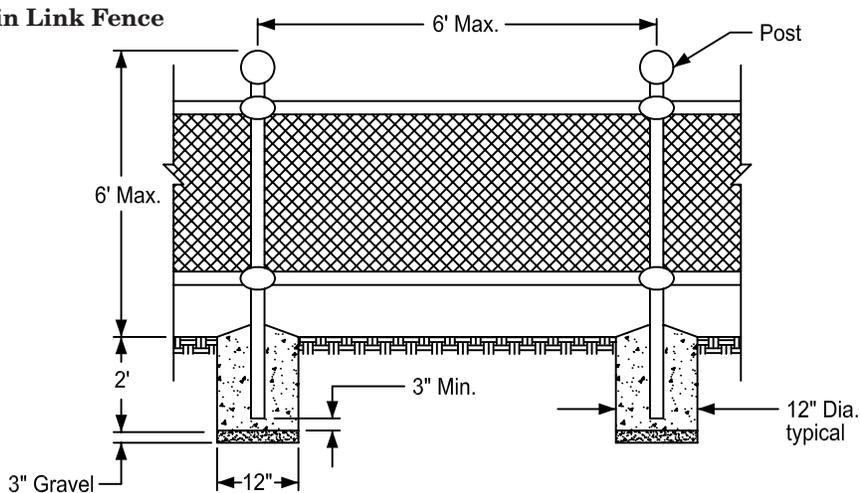


**Figure 2 / Board Fence**



WOOD FENCES IN AREAS WITHIN VERY HIGH FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES OR CITY OF SAN DIEGO BRUSH MANAGEMENT ZONES MAY BE SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

**Figure 3 / Chain Link Fence**



ral soil or compacted fill which has been compacted to at least 90 percent density. Soil should be dampened prior to placing concrete in footings, See figure 4.

If fences do not conform with the design criteria in this bulletin, fences shall be designed by a registered professional (civil engineer or architect) licensed in the State of California. Plans may be submitted and soil report may be required.

**A. MASONRY BLOCKS**

Concrete masonry units shall be of sizes shown on drawings and conform to ASTM C 90 (CBC 2103.1) Medium Weight Units with maximum linear shrinkage of 0.06%,  $F'_m = 1,500$  psi grouted solid reinforced cells. All head and bed joints shall be 3/8" thick. Bed joints of the starting course over the concrete foundation may be between 1/4" and 3/4". (ACI 530.1-05 section 3.3B)

**No special inspection is required for fences up to 6 feet in height.**

**B. CONCRETE**

Concrete for footings must have a minimum compressive strength of 2,500 psi at 28 days. (CBC 1805.4.2.1). Cement shall conform to ASTM C 150 (ACI 318-05 section 3.2)

**Note:** Plastic (Stucco) cement ASTM C 1328 is not permitted in fences located in Seismic Design Category D.

**C. MORTAR**

The mortar mix must have a compressive strength equal to 1,800 psi minimum (CBC Table 2105.2.2.1.2). Mortar for use in masonry construction shall conform to ASTM C 270 and shall conform to the proportion specifications of Table 2103.8(1) or the property specifications of Table 2103.8(2) of the CBC.

**D. GROUT**

Grout must have a compressive strength equal to 2,000 psi minimum. Grout shall conform to Table 2103.12 or to ASTM C 476. When grout conforms to ASTM C 476, the grout shall be specified by proportion requirements or property requirements (CBC 2103.12)

**E. REINFORCING STEEL**

Reinforcing steel must be deformed and comply with ASTM A 615 (CBC 2103.13.1), Grade 40 or 60. When one continuous bar cannot be used, a lap or splice of 40-bar diameters is required. All bars shall be clean of loose flaky rust, grease or other materials likely to impair bond. (ACI 318-05 section 5.7).

Reinforcement in concrete shall be protected from corrosion and exposure to chlorides. (ACI 318-05 section 7.7.6). Concrete protection for reinforcement shall be at least 3" to earth

when the concrete is poured against the earth. (ACI 318-05 section 7.7.1).

**F. MORTAR KEY**

To insure proper bonding between the footing and the first course of block, a mortar key must be formed by embedding a flat 2x4 flush with and at the top of the freshly placed footing. It should be removed after the concrete has started to harden (about 1 hour). A mortar key may be omitted if the first course of block is set into the fresh concrete and a good bond is obtained.

**Table A / Requirements for Masonry Walls**

Fence height, H (feet)	Material	Footing width, W	Reinforcing steel
4	6" concrete block	1' - 10"	#4 @ 16" o.c.
	8" concrete block	1' - 11"	#4 @ 24" o.c.
5	6" concrete block	2' - 3"	#5 @ 8" o.c.
	8" concrete block	2' - 4"	#4 @ 24" o.c.
6	8" concrete block	2' - 11"	#4 @ 8" o.c.

**Figure 4 / Masonry Fence**

