

County of Los Alamos

Building Safety Division

Policy: Alternate Materials and Methods

Effective Date: June 15, 2021

Approved By: David Martinez (June 15, 2021)

Revised: 
Elias Isaacson, CDD Director


Date

Policy: Applicants must submit documentation for review by the Building Official or designee showing that the proposed alternate material, design, or method of construction:

- Comply with the intent of the provisions of the code.
- Is, for the intended purpose, at least equivalent in quality, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability, and safety as specified in the code.

If the request is denied, the Building Official or designer must provide a written explanation of the reasons for the denial.

1. Purpose

This policy aims to create a transparent process for applicants requesting approval for alternative materials, designs, or construction methods. It guarantees that these alternatives align with the building code's purpose, ensure public safety, and provide at least the same or better performance compared to the prescriptive requirements of the code.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all permit applicants within Los Alamos County who propose using alternate materials, methods, or designs that differ from those explicitly prescribed in the adopted building codes.

This includes:

- Innovative or new construction materials.
- Alternative methods of installation.
- Design solutions not explicitly covered by prescriptive code requirements.

3. Eligibility

The following are eligible to submit alternate materials/methods for review:

- Licensed design professionals (architects, engineers) acting on behalf of project owners.

- Contractors or permit holders propose alternatives to code-prescribed methods.
- Property owners (where allowed by law) who submit sufficient technical documentation.

Eligibility requirements:

- The applicant must submit supporting documentation demonstrating equivalency to code standards.
- Proposals must be specific to the project under permit and may not be generalized for use beyond the approved scope.

4. Procedures

Application Submission

- Applicant submits the alternate materials/methods request along with required supporting documentation to the Building Safety Division.

Review Process

- The Building Official or designee reviews the request against code intent and equivalency standards.
- Additional information may be requested if necessary.

Decision and Recordkeeping

- Written approval or denial is issued.
- All documentation is filed in the project record for future reference.

5. Requirements

Submittal Package:

- Description of proposed alternate material/method.
- Supporting technical documentation (manufacturer specifications, engineering reports, testing data, code evaluation reports such as ICC-ES, etc.).
- Analysis showing equivalency to the prescriptive code requirements.

Professional Stamps:

- Submittals must be prepared, signed, and sealed by a licensed design professional when required by state law.

Review Criteria:

- Compliance with the intent of the code.
- Equivalency in performance, durability, and safety.
- Adequacy for the intended purpose.

Approval/Denial:

- Written approval shall be issued by the Building Official or Designee and placed in the permit record.
- If denied, written notification with reasons must be provided to the applicant.

6. Enforcement

Use of unapproved alternate materials or methods may result in:

- Stop-work orders
- Permit suspension or revocation.
- Correction notices requiring compliance with approved methods