

FIRE APPARATUS ACCESS ROADS

2025 California Fire Code — Section 503, Fire Apparatus Access Roads

Purpose: This handout summarizes the base requirements of 2025 CFC §503 and related Chapter 5 provisions, including where the code leaves a design decision to the fire code official.

Key Measurements

Minimum clear width	Minimum vertical clearance	Dead-end turnaround trigger
20 ft	13 ft 6 in	Over 150 ft

Base CFC §503 Requirements

Requirement	What the Code Requires
Where required	Approved fire apparatus access roads are required for each facility, building, or portion of a building that is newly constructed or moved into or within the jurisdiction. CFC §503.1.1.
Access distance	The approved route must generally extend to within 150 feet of all portions of the facility and all portions of the exterior walls of the first story. The fire code official may approve an increased distance under the exceptions listed in §503.1.1.
Additional access	More than one access road may be required when congestion, terrain, climate, or other conditions could impair a single access route. CFC §503.1.2.
Clear width	Minimum unobstructed width: 20 feet, exclusive of shoulders, except for approved security gates under §503.6. CFC §503.2.1.
Vertical clearance	Minimum unobstructed vertical clearance: 13 feet 6 inches. CFC §503.2.1.
Surface	The road must be designed and maintained to support fire-apparatus loads and provide all-weather driving capability. CFC §503.2.3.
Turning radius	The required turning radius is established by the fire code official based on the apparatus that must use the road. CFC §503.2.4.
Dead ends	A dead-end fire apparatus access road more than 150 feet long must have an approved area for fire apparatus to turn around. CFC §503.2.5.
Bridges / elevated surfaces	Where part of the access road, bridges and elevated surfaces must comply with AASHTO HB-17 and be designed for a live load sufficient for the imposed fire-apparatus loads. CFC §503.2.6.
Grade	Permitted road grade is established by the fire code official based on the fire department apparatus. CFC §503.2.7.
Approach / departure	Angles of approach and departure must be within limits established by the fire code official based on apparatus. CFC §503.2.8.

Fire Lanes, Obstructions, and Gates

Requirement	What the Code Requires
Fire-lane marking	Where required, approved signs, notices, or markings must identify fire apparatus access roads and include “NO PARKING—FIRE LANE.” Markings must remain clean, legible, and visible. CFC §503.3.
Obstructions	Fire apparatus access roads may not be obstructed, including by parked vehicles. Required widths and clearances must be maintained at all times. CFC §503.4.
Traffic calming	Traffic-calming devices are prohibited unless approved by the fire code official. CFC §503.4.1.
Required barricades	The fire code official may require gates or approved barricades across certain access roads, trails, or other accessways. CFC §503.5.
Security gates	A security gate across a fire apparatus access road requires approval and an approved emergency means of operation. Gate and emergency operation must remain operational. CFC §503.6.
Gate standards	Electric gate operators, where provided, must be listed to UL 325. Gates intended for automatic operation must comply with ASTM F2200. CFC §§503.5 and 503.6.

Plan Review and Construction Timing

Construction documents: Plans for proposed fire apparatus access, fire-lane locations, and security gates across fire apparatus access roads must be submitted to the fire department for review and approval before construction. CFC §501.3.

Timing: Where a fire apparatus access road is required, it must be installed and made serviceable prior to and during construction unless an approved alternative method of protection is provided. CFC §501.4.

Appendix D — Supplemental Only if Adopted or Referenced

Important code status: 2025 CFC Appendix D is not automatically mandatory. The appendix states that its provisions apply only when specifically referenced by the adopting ordinance or legislation of the jurisdiction, and the California matrix notes that Appendix D is not adopted by the State Fire Marshal.

If Appendix D has been locally adopted or specifically referenced, it adds criteria for items such as a 75,000-pound design load, a 26-foot road width where a hydrant is located, a 10-percent grade limit unless otherwise approved, detailed dead-end turnaround dimensions, gate criteria, fire-lane signs, aerial apparatus access, and multiple-access requirements for certain developments.

Official References

Primary: 2025 California Fire Code, Title 24, Part 9 with January 2026 Errata — Chapter 5, §§501 and 503

[ICC Digital Codes — 2025 California Fire Code, Chapter 5](#)

Supplemental: 2025 California Fire Code — Appendix D, Fire Apparatus Access Roads (only where adopted or referenced)

[ICC Digital Codes — 2025 California Fire Code, Appendix D](#)

Code note: This handout summarizes cited code requirements for public use. It does not replace the adopted California Fire Code, locally adopted amendments, approved plans, permits, or determinations of the fire code official.