

SURFACE STABILIZATION

Mulching



Mulching is the application of plant residues/materials to enhance and protect vegetative establishment and minimize erosion potential.

Purpose

- To prevent erosion by protecting the soil from wind and water impact.
- To provide temporary surface stabilization.
- To prevent soil from crusting.
- To conserve soil moisture, moderate soil temperature, and promote seed germination and seedling growth.

Note: This measure should not be used in storm water runoff channels or areas where concentrated flow is attempted.

Specifications

Materials

Table 1. Mulch Specifications

Material ¹	Rate per Acre	Comments
Straw or hay	2 tons	Should be dry, free of undesirable seeds. Spread by hand or machine. Must be crimped or anchored (see Table 2).
Wood fiber or cellulose	1 ton	Apply with a hydraulic mulch machine and use with tacking agent.

¹ Mulching is not recommended in concentrated flows. Consider erosion control blankets or other stabilization methods.

Coverage

The mulch should have a uniform density of at least 75 percent over the soil surface.

Anchoring

Table 2. Mulch Anchoring Methods

Anchoring Method ¹	How to Apply
Mulch anchoring tool or farm disk (dull, serrated, and blades set straight)	Crimp or punch the straw or hay two to four inches into the soil. Operate machinery on the contour of the slope.
Cleating with dozer tracks	Operate dozer up and down slope to prevent formation of rills by dozer cleats.
Wood hydromulch fibers	Apply according to manufacturer's recommendations.
Synthetic tackifiers, binders, or soil stabilizers	Apply according to manufacturer's recommendations.
Netting (synthetic or biodegradable material)	Install netting immediately after applying mulch. Anchor netting with staples. Edges of netting strips should overlap with each up-slope strip overlapping four to six inches over the adjacent down-slope strip. Best suited to slope applications. In most instances, installation details are site specific, so manufacturer's recommendations should be followed.

¹ All forms of mulch must be anchored to prevent displacement by wind and/or water.

Application

1. Apply mulch at the recommended rate shown in Table 1.
2. Spread the mulch material uniformly by hand, hayfork, mulch blower, or hydraulic mulch machine. After spreading, no more than 25 percent of the ground should be visible.
3. Anchor straw or hay mulch immediately after application. The mulch can be anchored using one of the methods listed below:
 - a. Crimp with a mulch anchoring tool, a weighted farm disk with dull serrated blades set straight, or track cleats of a bulldozer,
 - b. Apply hydraulic mulch with short cellulose fibers,
 - c. Apply a liquid tackifier, or
 - d. Cover with netting secured by staples.

Maintenance

- Inspect within 24 hours of each rain event and at least once every seven calendar days.
- Check for erosion or movement of mulch; repair damaged areas, reseed, apply new mulch and anchor the mulch in place.
- Continue inspections until vegetation is firmly established.
- If erosion is severe or recurring, use erosion control blankets or other more substantial stabilization methods to protect the area.