

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

OBSTRUCTION REMOVAL

(Ac.)

CODE 500

DEFINITION

Removal and disposal of buildings, structures, other works of improvement, vegetation, debris or other materials.

PURPOSE

To safely remove and dispose of unwanted obstructions in order to apply conservation practices or facilitate the planned land use.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On any land where existing obstructions interfere with planned land use development, public safety or infrastructure. This standard is not intended for the removal of obstructions from aquatic environments.

CRITERIA

Plan, design and implement obstruction removal to comply with all federal, state and local laws and regulations.

Remove obstructions by demolition, excavation or other means required for removal. Dispose of all debris from the obstruction removal so that it does not impede subsequent work or cause onsite or offsite damage.

Dispose of inorganic materials such as rock piles, boulders, stones, concrete or masonry structures and metal or concrete fence posts by reusing, removal or burial at approved locations.

Dispose of organic materials such as wooden fence posts, woody vegetation, and woody building materials by removal to an approved

landfill or recycling center, burial at an approved location or burning. If burning is used, implement appropriate smoke management to protect public health and safety.

Dispose of trash and non-woody building materials in an approved landfill or recycling center.

When removing buildings, ensure that all utilities, such as gas and electric, have been shut off and disconnected from the structure before beginning demolition.

Prior to any work contact utility companies or the state one call system to identify the location of utility lines in the construction area and to arrange the shut off of utilities if necessary.

The removal of obstructions can expose toxic or polluted materials. If toxic or polluted materials are expected to be found during the obstruction removal, specify appropriate handling and disposal criteria in the plans and specifications

When removing obstructions that contain chromated copper arsenate (CCA) treated wood, do not burn the wood. Burning of CCA treated wood can release toxic amounts of arsenic into the air and ash that are very harmful to human and animal health. CCA treated wood should be buried in an approved landfill.

Reshape and regrade all areas disturbed by the obstruction removal so that they blend with the surrounding land features and conditions. Any foundations or below ground portions of the obstruction that remain in place shall have sufficient soil cover to meet the requirements of the planned land use. Compact fill areas according to site specific requirements.

Revegetate or otherwise protect from erosion disturbed areas as soon as possible after construction. Refer to NRCS Conservation Practice Standard 342, Critical Area Planting for seedbed preparation, seeding, fertilizing, and mulching requirements.

CONSIDERATIONS

The recycling or reuse of materials should be considered as the first option for disposal of materials from obstruction removal. Most woody debris can be recycled into mulch or other products. Recycling or other environmentally friendly options exist for the disposal of many other materials as well.

Demolition activities can generate large amounts of dust. Where necessary, use dust suppression techniques such as spraying water on the removal site to suppress dust.

Obstruction removal can result in the disturbance of large areas that are subject to erosion during the demolition process.

Where necessary include provisions in the plans to control erosion and offsite sedimentation.

Obstruction removal often involves heavy equipment working in environmentally sensitive areas. Ensure that servicing and refueling of equipment is done in a manner that minimizes spills and volatilization.

Demolition of structures and the removal of debris can be a hazardous undertaking. This is especially true for the removal of downed and tangled trees. This type of work should be done by well qualified personnel with proper equipment following appropriate safety procedures.

Old buildings, structures and trees can provide habitat for wildlife. The potential for use by and presence of at-risk species should be considered and addressed prior to any obstruction removal activity. The presence of roosting birds and bats may also

pose a health and safety hazard to workers that should be considered.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Prepare plans and specifications for obstruction removal that describe the requirements for applying the practice according to this standard. Plans and specifications for this practice can be included in the plans and specifications for the practice it supports. As a minimum the plans and specifications shall include:

- A plan view showing the location of obstruction removal site.
- Details and location for the disposal of materials from the obstruction removal.
- Details of how the site will be stabilized after construction.
- Construction specifications that describe in writing, site specific requirements for the obstruction removal.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Prepare an operation and maintenance (O&M) plan for the operator. O&M for this practice may be addressed in the O&M plans for the practice it supports. The minimum requirements to be addressed in the operation and maintenance plan are:

Periodic checking to ensure the site remains stable after the obstruction removal.

When disposal of debris occurs on site, periodic checking to ensure that the disposal site remains stable.

Repair any problems as soon as possible.

REFERENCES

U. S. Department of Labor. Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Safety and Health Regulations for Construction, 29 CFR 1926. U. S. Washington, DC.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#), or visit the [Field Office Technical Guide](#).