

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

COMPOSTING FACILITY

(No.)

CODE 317

DEFINITION

A structure or device to contain and facilitate the controlled aerobic decomposition of manure or other organic material by micro-organisms into a biologically stable organic material that is suitable for use as a soil amendment.

PURPOSE

To reduce the pollution potential and improve the handling characteristics of organic waste solids; and produce a soil amendment that adds organic matter and beneficial organisms, provides slow-release plant-available nutrients, and improves soil condition.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies where:

Organic waste material is generated by agricultural production or processing.

The facility is a component of a planned waste management system;

The facility can be constructed, operated and maintained without polluting air and/or water resources; and,

The compost can be applied to the land or marketed to the public.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Install and operate the facility in compliance with all federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations.

Safety. Incorporate safety and personal protection features and practices into the facility and its operation as appropriate to minimize the occurrence of equipment and biosecurity hazards during the composting process.

Facility Siting. Locate on a base of low permeability soils, concrete, or other liner material that will not allow contamination of ground water. The floor of the composting facility will be at least two feet above the seasonal high water table.

Composting facilities containing manure will be constructed out of the 100-year floodplain, unless permitted by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Division of Water, and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

For other vegetative and organic matter composting facilities, locate outside of floodplains when practical; otherwise protect the facility from inundation or damage from a 25-year flood event.

Non-farm operations where imports of vegetative and other organic material other than manure and animal mortality are greater than 2,000 pounds per year and is intended for export or sale, will locate the facility at least 200 feet away from potable water wells and residential structures. The facility will also be located outside of the 10-year floodplain. Written consent from an occupant within 200 feet may be obtained to waive the setback requirement.

Locate so that prevailing winds and landscape elements minimize odors and protect visual resources, and following the setbacks in Table 1.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service State Office, or download it from the Field Office Technical Guide for your State.

Table 1. Setback Distances for facilities containing dead animals and/or manure

Features (known and identifiable at the time of application)	Minimum Setback Distance (feet)
Public Water Supply and Surface Intake Structure	1000
Offsite Residential and Public Buildings	400
Surface Waters of the State and Drainage Inlets (Including Water and Sediment Control Basins)	100
Sinkholes (measured from the Superficial Opening or Lowest Point)	100
Water Wells (onsite & offsite)	100
Property Lines and Public Roads	100

Direct surface runoff away from the compost facility.

Direct contaminated runoff from the composting operation to an appropriate storage or treatment facility for further management.

Locate so that water is available to the facility during dry periods to ensure proper moisture and acceptable curing times to meet the management goals.

Facility Type. Select the type of composting facility or method based on the type and availability of raw material, the desired quality of finished compost, equipment, labor, time and land available.

Meet the structural requirements of Indiana (IN) Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) Standard (313) Waste Storage Facility when designing slabs, walls, and support structures. Meet the requirements of IN FOTG Standard (367) Roofs and Covers when designing roofs.

Facility Size. Size the composting facilities to accommodate the amount of raw material planned for active composting, with a capacity consistent with the composting processes that will be used to produce the

desired compost product, and with sufficient finishing time as required to achieve the desired characteristics. Space for compost storage may be included in the finishing space or in a separate facility. Select dimensions to accommodate handling and processing.

A facility for manure and other agricultural organic waste that is to be used on the farm will have the capacity to produce compost that can be safely stored without undesirable odors. This requires the temperature of the compost to be maintained above 104°F for five days with at least four hours above 130°F during that time period.

A facility to produce compost for use off the farm or for sale will have the capacity to significantly reduce pathogens. For a static pile or within vessel facility this requires the temperature of the compost to be maintained above 130°F for three days. The total compost period will include time for the initial primary stage of composting and time for secondary stage composting. For a windrow system this requires the temperature of the compost to be above 130°F for 15 days with a minimum of five turnings of the compost.

Animal Mortality Composting. If the facility is to be used to compost animal carcasses it will have the capacity to maintain the compost temperature greater than 130° F for at least 5 days as an average throughout the compost mass followed by a compatible time for secondary composting. Size animal mortality composting facilities according to the methods provided in the National Engineering Handbook Part 637, Chapter 2 – Composting (NEH 637.0213, Dead Animal Composting), National Engineering Handbook Part 651, Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook, Chapter 10 Mortality Management (NEH 651.1007), NRCS or comparable extension publication.

Composters will be a building with roof and side walls. Prevent or control leachate leaving from the composter area.

Rotary Drums/In-Vessel. Rotary drums or other manufactured products for the purpose of composting will be installed according to manufacturer’s requirements. Secondary composting bins or appropriate area will be

installed to accept primary compost from the drum. Dead animals will enter the drum within 24 hours or be underlain and completely covered in appropriate material (sawdust, finished compost or other carbonaceous material).

Base the size of dead animal composting facilities on normal mortality loss records for the operation. If these data are not available use established mortality rates for the type of operation. Ensure that the final product of the composting process has no visible pieces of soft tissue remaining.

Use of Finished Compost. Land application of finished compost will be in accordance with IN FOTG Standard (590) Nutrient Management.

CONSIDERATIONS

To reduce offensive odors increase the carbon nitrogen ratio. A carbon nitrogen ration of 30:1 in the initial mix should have minimal odors.

Minimize odors and nitrogen loss by selecting carbonaceous material that, when blended with the nitrogenous material, provides a balance of nutrients and porous texture for aeration.

A chemical neutralizing or other additive agent should be used if structural components do not provide adequate odor reduction.

Maximize solar warming by aligning piles north to south configured with moderate side slopes.

Orient windrows to prevent ponding of surface runoff.

Protect compost facilities from the wind in cold or dry climates. Wind protection may help prevent excess drying of the compost.

Minimize blown in rain by providing roof overhang.

For facilities that are organic producers or that sell compost to organic producers, ensure that the treated lumber used in the stacking facility meets the requirements for organic production. It may be best to have the producer consult with the organic certifier as to the use and acceptability of treated lumber for litter and compost storage.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Prepare plans and specifications in accordance with the criteria of this standard and describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended use, including:

Layout and location of livestock facilities, waste collection points, and/or waste transfer

Size, type and number of animals or other sources of organic feedstock

Grading plan showing excavation, fill, and drainage, as appropriate

Size and capacity needed

Design requirements

Safety requirement for operation

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Develop an operation and maintenance plan that is consistent with the purposes of this practice and the life of the composting facility. Recipe ingredients and the sequence that they are to be layered and mixed will be given in the plan.

Compost Mix. Develop a compost mix that encourages aerobic microbial decomposition and avoids nuisance odors.

Carbon-Nitrogen Ratio. The initial compost mix will result in a carbon to nitrogen (C:N) ratio between 25:1 and 40:1. Compost with a lesser carbon to nitrogen ratio can be used if nitrogen mobilization is not a concern.

Carbon Source. Store a dependable source of carbonaceous material with a high C:N ratio to mix with nitrogen rich waste materials.

Bulking Materials. Add bulking materials to the mix as necessary to enhance aeration. The bulking material may be the carbonaceous material used in the mix or a non-biodegradable material that is salvaged at the end of the compost period. Make provision for the salvage of any non-biodegradable material used in the composting process.

Moisture Level. Maintain adequate moisture in the compost mix throughout the compost period within the range of 40 to 65 percent (wet basis). Prevent excess

moisture from accumulating in the compost in high precipitation climatic regions. This may require the facility to be covered.

Temperature of Compost Mix. Manage the compost to attain and then maintain the internal temperature for the duration required to meet management goals. It may be necessary for the compost to reach 145°F to adequately destroy weed seeds. Closely monitor temperatures above 165°F. Take action immediately to cool piles that have reached temperatures above 185°F.

Turning/Aeration. The frequency of turning/aeration will be appropriate for the composting method used, and to attain the desired amount of moisture removal and temperature control while maintaining aerobic degradation.

Monitoring: The operation and maintenance plan will state that composting is a biological process that needs monitoring and management throughout the composting period to insure proper composting processes. The operation may need to undergo some trial and error in the start-up of a new composting facility. Manage the compost piles for temperature, odors, moisture, and oxygen, as appropriate. Test the finished compost as appropriate to assure that the required decomposition has been reached.

REFERENCES

USDA, NRCS. 2000. National Engineering Handbook, Part 637, Chapter 2, Composting. Washington, D.C.

Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM): IC 13-20-10