

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**ROOF RUNOFF STRUCTURE**

(No.)

**CODE 558**

**DEFINITION**

Structures that collect, control, and transport precipitation from roofs.

**PURPOSE**

To improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, increase infiltration, protect structures, and/or increase water quantity.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

Where roof runoff from precipitation needs to be:

- Diverted away from structures or contaminated areas
- Collected, controlled, and transported to a stable outlet
- Collected and used for other purposes such as irrigation or animal watering facility

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes**

The minimum design capacity for roof runoff structures shall be a 10-year storm frequency, 5-minute rainfall precipitation event, except where excluding roof runoff from manure management facilities. In that case, a 25-year frequency, 5-minute precipitation event shall be used to design roof runoff structures (refer to [Appendix 10B in Chapter 10 of National Engineering Handbook Part 651, Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook](#)). When gutters are used, the capacity of the downspout(s) must equal or exceed the gutter flow rate.

Runoff may empty into surface or underground outlets or onto the ground surface. Surface and underground outlets shall be sized to ensure adequate design capacity and shall provide for clean-out as appropriate. When runoff from roofs empties onto the ground surface, a stable outlet shall be provided. When runoff is conveyed through a gutter and downspout system, an elbow and energy dissipation device shall be placed at the end of the downspout to provide a stable outlet and direct water away from the building.

Surface or ground outlets (such as rock pads, rock-filled trenches with subsurface drains, concrete and other erosion-resistant pads, or preformed channels) may be used--particularly where snow and ice are a significant load component on roofs.

In regions where snow and ice will accumulate on roofs, guards and sufficient supports to withstand the anticipated design load shall be included.

Roof runoff structures shall be made of durable materials with a minimum design life of 15 years. Roof gutters and downspouts may be made of aluminum, galvanized steel, wood, or plastic. Aluminum gutters and downspouts shall have a minimum nominal thickness of 0.027 inch and 0.020 inch, respectively. Galvanized steel gutters and downspouts shall be a minimum 28 gauge. Wood shall be clear and free of knots. Wood may be redwood, cedar, cypress, or other species that has the desired longevity. Plastics shall contain ultraviolet stabilizers. Dissimilar metals shall not be in contact with each other.

Rock-filled trenches and pads shall consist of poorly graded rock (all rock fragments approximately the same size) and be free of

appreciable amounts of sand and/or soil particles. Crushed limestone shall not be used for backfill material unless it has been washed. Subsurface drains or outlets shall meet the material requirements of the applicable Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation practice standard.

Concrete appurtenances used shall meet the requirements of [Construction Specification 32, Structure Concrete, in Chapter 2 of National Engineering Handbook Part 642, Specifications for Construction Contracts](#).

Roof runoff structures shall be protected from damage by livestock and equipment.

#### **Additional Criteria to Increase Infiltration**

Runoff shall be routed onto pervious landscaped areas (such as lawns, mass planting areas, infiltration trenches, and natural areas) to increase infiltration of runoff. These areas shall be capable of infiltrating the runoff in such a way that replenishes soil moisture without adversely affecting the desired plant species.

#### **Additional Criteria to Protect Structures**

Runoff shall be directed away from structure foundations to avoid wetness and hydraulic loading on the foundation.

On expansive soils or bedrock, downspout extensions shall be used to discharge runoff a minimum of 5 feet from the structure.

The discharge area for runoff must slope away from the protected structure.

#### **Additional Criteria to Increase Water Quantity**

Storage structures for non-potable purposes (such as irrigation water) shall be designed in accordance with NRCS conservation practice standards as appropriate.

Potable water storage structures shall be constructed of materials and in a manner that will not increase the contamination of the stored

water. Roof runoff collected and stored for potable uses must be treated prior to consumption and shall be tested periodically to ensure that adequate quality is maintained for human consumption.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS**

Avoid discharging outlets near wells and sinkholes.

Some designs may provide secondary benefits (for example, rock pads may also reduce rodent problems around livestock and poultry barns).

#### **PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

The plans and specifications shall show the location, spacing, size, and grade of all gutters and downspouts and type and quality of material to be used. Plans and specifications for other practices essential to the proper functioning of roof runoff structures (such as underground outlets) shall be included.

#### **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

An operation and maintenance plan shall be developed that is consistent with the purposes of the practice, its intended life, safety requirements, and the criteria for the design. The plan shall contain, but not be limited to, the following provisions:

- Keep roof runoff structures clean and free of obstructions that reduce flow
- Make regular inspections and perform repair maintenance as needed to ensure proper functioning of the roof runoff structures

#### **REFERENCES**

USDA-NRCS. 1999. National Engineering Handbook Part 651, *Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook*.