

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Practice Standard**

**RESIDUE MANAGEMENT, SEASONAL
(Ac.)
CODE 344**

DEFINITION

Managing the amount, orientation, and distribution of crop and other plant residues on the soil surface during part of the year while growing crops in a clean tilled seedbed.

PURPOSE

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to support one or more of the following:

- Reduce sheet and rill erosion.
- Provide food and escape cover for wildlife.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to all cropland and other land where crops are grown.

This standard includes residue management methods practiced during the part of the year from harvest until residue is buried by tillage for seedbed preparation.

CRITERIA

Residue to be retained on the field will be uniformly distributed on the soil surface. Where combines or similar machines are used for harvesting, they will be equipped with spreaders capable of spreading residues over at least 80 percent of the working width of the headers. Where cotton pickers or similar machines are used for harvesting the stalks will be mowed after harvest, except where flooding is a problem. Corn or grain sorghum residue will be more effective if the residue is mowed after harvest.

Residues will not be burned or buried after harvest.

The amount of residue needed to reduce erosion within the soil loss tolerance (T) or any

other planned soil loss objective will be determined by using current approved erosion prediction technology. Partial removal of residue by means such as baling or grazing will be limited to leave adequate amounts of residue and/or native vegetative to control soil erosion. The remaining residue shall be maintained on the soil surface until planting, usually after March 1, or the date specified by the C-factor. Calculations will account for the effects of other practices in the conservation management system.

Any tillage that occurs during the management period will be limited to methods which leave residue on the soil surface and maintain the planned cover conditions. This usually includes such tillage as paratill or narrow shank subsoilers. It does not include chisel plows or wide point subsoilers.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Excess removal of plant residue by baling or grazing often produces negative impacts on resources. These activities should not be performed without full evaluation of impacts on soil, water, animal, plant and air resources.
- Production of adequate amounts of crop residue necessary for the proper functioning of this practice can be enhanced by selection of high residue producing crops and crop varieties, by the use of no-till cover crops, and by adjustment of plant populations and row spacing.
- When planting on a clean seedbed, exposure to erosion can be minimized by completing tillage and planting in a single operation, or by performing primary tillage no more than three days before planting.
- The value of residue for wildlife habitat can be enhanced by leaving rows of unharvested grain standing at intervals across the field.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for establishment and operation of this practice will be prepared for each field or treatment unit according to the criteria and considerations described in this standard. Specifications will be recorded using approved specification sheets or job sheets (approved by the state agronomist), or narrative statement in the conservation plan.

