![USDA logo] **United States Department of Agriculture**

Conservation Practice Overview

Mine Shaft and Adit Closing (Code 457)

Mine shafts and adits can be closed by filling, plugging, or capping, or by installing barriers, gating, or fencing.

Practice Information

An underground mine can have a shaft, which is a vertical opening; or an adit, which is a horizontal tunnel; or both. Purposes of a mine shaft or adit closure are to:

- reduce hazards to humans and/or animals,
- maintain or improve access and/or habitat for wildlife,
- protect cultural resources,
- reduce subsidence problems,
- reduce the emission of hazardous gases,
- reduce or prevent contamination of surface and groundwater.

Safety is the first and foremost concern when beginning the process of a mine closure. All underground mines must be tested for the presence of hazardous gases prior to site investigation activities. Entry into a mine is restricted to individuals with the proper training.

Mine shafts and adits can be completely closed by filling the entire mine or by plugging or capping the opening. These techniques eliminate access into the mine and can also be used to prevent contaminated water from leaving the mine.

A mine shaft or adit does not always require complete closure to eliminate the safety concerns. Restricting human access to a site with barriers, gates, or fences is often sufficient. Careful selection of the barrier, gate, or fence will allow bats and other small animals to continue to inhabit the mine.

This practice has a minimum expected life of 15 years. Operation and maintenance of a mine shaft or adit closure will depend upon the method of closure. Normally, the work will consist of conducting periodic inspections and repairing or replacing damaged components.

Common Associated Practices

Mine Shaft and Adit Closing (457) is commonly applied with conservation practices such as Land Reclamation, Abandoned Mined Land (543); and Land Reclamation, Toxic Discharge Control (455).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.