

Construction Specification 423 – Earthfill and Gravel Fill

1. Scope

The work consists of the construction of earth embankments, other earthfills, earth backfills, and gravel fills required by the drawings and specifications.

2. Material

All fill material shall be obtained from required excavations and approved borrow areas. The selection, blending, routing, and disposition of material in the various fills shall be subject to approval by the engineer.

Fill materials shall contain no frozen soil, sod, brush, roots, or other perishable material. Rock particles larger than the maximum size specified for each type of fill shall be removed prior to compaction of the fill.

Earth fill is composed of natural earth materials that can be placed and compacted by construction equipment operated in a conventional manner

Gravel Fill:

Gravel fill material shall be sand, gravel, or crushed stone, or mixtures thereof, obtained from the specified sources. The material shall be selected as necessary to avoid the inclusion of organic matter, clay balls, excessive fine particles, or other substances that would interfere with their free-draining properties. If requested, samples shall be provided to NRCS prior to construction for approval.

3. Foundation preparation

Foundations for earthfill and gravel fill shall be stripped to remove vegetation and other unsuitable material or shall be excavated as specified. All stumps and roots having a diameter of one inch or larger shall be grubbed out to a depth of at least two feet below subgrade elevation for concrete structures and one foot below the ground surface at embankment sites and other designated areas.

Except as otherwise specified, each foundation surface shall be graded to remove surface irregularities and shall be scarified parallel to the axis of the fill or otherwise acceptably scored and loosened to a minimum depth of 2 inches. The moisture content of the loosened material shall be sufficient to insure a good bond between layers or shall be controlled as specified. The surface material of the foundation shall be compacted and bonded with the first layer of earthfill as specified for subsequent layers of earthfill.

Foundations for gravel fill shall not be scarified. Unless otherwise specified, foundations shall be compacted by routing earthmoving equipment over the entire surface. Soft or weak areas shall be excavated and backfilled with suitable material to provide a firm, uniform foundation.

Earth abutment surfaces shall be free of loose, uncompacted earth in excess of 2 inches in depth normal to the slope and shall be at such a moisture content that the earthfill can be compacted against them to produce a good bond between the fill and the abutments.

Rock foundation and abutment surfaces shall be cleared of all loose material by hand or other effective means and shall be free of standing water when fill is placed upon them. Occasional rock outcrops in earth foundations for earthfill, except in dams and other structures designed to restrain the movement of water, shall not require special treatment if they do not interfere with compaction of the foundation and initial layers of the fill or the bond between the foundation and the fill.

Foundation and abutment surfaces shall be no steeper than one horizontal to one vertical unless otherwise specified. Test pits or other cavities shall be filled with compacted earthfill conforming to the specifications for the earthfill to be placed upon the foundation.

4. Placement

Earth fill or drain fill shall not be placed until the required excavation and foundation preparation have been completed and the foundation has been inspected and approved by the engineer or other qualified official. Earth fill or drain fill shall not be placed upon a frozen surface nor shall snow, ice, or frozen material be incorporated in the earthfill matrix.

Fill shall be placed in approximately horizontal layers. The thickness of each layer before compaction shall not exceed the maximum thickness specified. Materials placed by dumping in piles or windows shall be spread uniformly to not more than the specified thickness before being compacted.

Hand compacted fill shall be placed in layers whose thickness before compaction does not exceed the maximum thickness specified for layers of earth backfill compacted by manually directed power tampers.

Earth backfill shall be placed in a manner that prevents damage to the structures and allows the structures to assume the loads from the earth backfill gradually and uniformly. The height of the earth backfill adjacent to a structure shall be increased at approximately the same rate on all sides of the structure.

Earthfill and earth backfill in dams, levees, and other structures designed to restrain the movement of water shall be placed to meet the following additional requirements:

- (a) The distribution of materials throughout each zone shall be essentially uniform, and the earthfill shall be free from lenses, pockets, streaks, or layers of material differing substantially in texture, moisture content, or gradation from the surrounding material. Zone earthfills shall be constructed concurrently unless otherwise specified.
- (b) If the surface of any layer becomes too hard and smooth for proper bond with the succeeding layer, it shall be scarified parallel to the axis of the fill to a depth of not less than 2 inches before the next layer is placed.
- (c) The top surface of embankments shall be maintained approximately level during construction with two exceptions: A crown or cross-slope of about 2 percent shall be maintained to ensure effective drainage, or as otherwise specified for drainfill or sectional zones.
- (d) Dam embankments shall be constructed in continuous layers from abutment to abutment except where openings to facilitate construction or to allow the

passage of streamflow during construction are specifically described in the design.

- (e) Embankments built at different levels as described under (c) or (d) above shall be constructed so that the slope of the bonding surfaces between embankment in place and embankment to be placed is not steeper than 3 feet horizontal to 1 foot vertical. The bonding surface of the embankment in place shall be stripped of all material not meeting the requirements of this specification and shall be scarified, moistened, and recompactd when the new earthfill is placed against it. This ensures a good bond with the new earthfill and obtains the specified moisture content and density at the contact of the in-place and new earthfills.

Any damage to the foundation surface or the trench sides or bottom occurring during placement of drain fill shall be repaired before drain fill placement is continued.

Drain fill over and/or around pipe or drain tile shall be placed to avoid any displacement in line or grade of the pipe or tile.

5. Control of moisture content

During placement and compaction of earth fill and earth backfill, the moisture content of the material being placed shall be maintained within the specified range. Unless otherwise specified, the fill material shall be moist enough so that material can be formed into a ball between the hands without crumbling. If the ball crumbles, the material is too dry. If the ball extrudes out of the hand when squeezed tightly, the material is too wet.

The application of water to the earthfill material shall be accomplished at the borrow areas insofar as practicable. Water may be applied by sprinkling the material after placement on the earthfill, if necessary. Uniform moisture distribution shall be obtained by disking.

Material that is too wet, when deposited on the earthfill shall either be removed or be dried to the specified moisture content prior to compaction.

If the top surface of the preceding layer of compacted earthfill or a foundation or abutment surface in the zone of contact with the earthfill becomes too dry to permit suitable bond, it shall either be removed or scarified and moistened by sprinkling to an acceptable moisture content before placement of the next layer of earthfill.

The moisture content for gravel fill shall be adequate to insure a firm, uniform compacted layer.

6. Compaction

Earthfill – Unless otherwise specified earthfill shall be compacted according to the specified compaction method requirements shown in Table 1 or an approved equivalent method. Each method will require the following general criteria;

- 1) Earthfill materials shall be placed and spread in horizontal layers.
- 2) Equipment speed shall not exceed 5 miles per hour.

- 3) Each layer shall be compacted by 4 passes of the specified equipment.
- 4) Each pass shall consist of at least one passage of the specified equipment over the entire surface of the layer.

Compaction Method	Equipment	Pressure (psi)	Maximum layer thickness (in)	Maximum rock size (in)
C1	Tamping roller (sheepsfoot)	100	9	6
C2	Pneumatic (rubber tire) Roller	80	9	6
C3	Loaded earth moving equipment	25	8	5
C4	Wheel type tractor (100 hp)	10	6	4
C5	Track type tractor	8	6	4

The compaction method shall be: _____.

Earth fill – Earth backfill adjacent to structures shall be compacted to a density equivalent to that of the surrounding in-place earth material or adjacent required earthfill or earth backfill. Unless otherwise shown in the drawings, the fill material shall be free of rocks over 3 inches and shall be placed in 4 inch horizontal layers. Compaction shall be accomplished by hand tamping or manually directed power tampers, plate vibrators, walk-behind, miniature, or self-propelled rollers. Unless otherwise specified heavy equipment including backhoe mounted power tampers or vibrating compactors and manually directed vibrating rollers shall not be operated within 2 feet of any structure. Towed or self-propelled vibrating rollers shall not be operated within 5 feet of any structure. Compaction by means of drop weights operating from a crane or hoist is not permitted.

Compaction of earth backfill adjacent to structures shall not be started until the following time intervals have elapsed after placement of the concrete unless with permission of the engineer.

Structure	Time interval (days)
Vertical or near-vertical walls with earth loading on one side only	14
Walls backfilled on both sides simultaneously	7
Conduits and spillway risers, cast-in-place (with inside forms in place)	7
Conduits and spillway risers, cast-in-place (inside forms removed)	14
Conduits, pre-cast, cradled	2
Conduits, pre-cast, bedded	1
Slabs and curbs	2
Cantilever outlet bents (backfilled both sides simultaneously)	3

Drain fill – Drain fill shall be compacted according to the general criteria and compaction method C3 or C4 specified for earthfill unless otherwise specified.

7. Reworking or removal and replacement of defective fill

Fill placed at densities lower than the specified minimum density or at moisture contents outside the specified acceptable range of moisture content or otherwise not conforming to the requirements of the specifications shall be reworked to meet the requirements or removed and replaced by acceptable earthfill. The replacement earthfill and the foundation, abutment and earthfill surfaces upon which it is placed shall conform to all requirements of this specification for foundation preparation, approval, placement, moisture control, and compaction. Plan method of replacement shall be agreed upon with the engineer before work begins.

8. Testing

During the course of the work, the engineer or designee will perform quality assurance evaluations to determine the specified materials, moisture content, and specified compaction method requirements are being met.

9. Specific details