

after the fire



Contour Sandbags

CAUTION: After a fire many trees are weakened from burning around the base of the trunk. The trees can fall over or blow down without warning. Shallow-rooted trees can also fall. Therefore be extremely alert when around burned trees.

What is a contour sandbags?

Biodegradable bags are filled with on site soil and bedded in a shallow trench forming a continuous barrier along the contour (across the slope) to intercept water running down the slope.



Sandbags are placed along the contour of the slope.

When are contour sandbags used?

Contour Sandbags are used on burned slopes that have less than 30% of the original ground cover remaining and are at risk for increased erosion. They can be installed on slopes up to 70 percent; however their effect diminishes greatly on slopes steeper than 50 percent. Soils can be shallow, but not less than about 6 inches. Contour Sandbags increase infiltration, add roughness, reduce erosion, and help retain eroded soil on the slope. Contour Sandbags should be effective for a period up to one year, providing short term protection on slopes where permanent vegetation will be established to provide long term erosion control. Contour Sandbags can accomplish the same treatment as Log Erosion Barriers, but require less skilled labor to install and can be placed on the slope more effectively. Sandbags should not be placed across drainage swales and channels with more than one acre of contributing drainage area because they are not sturdy enough to resist the forces of concentrated flows.



How are contour sandbags installed?

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Installation of Contour Sand Bags is straight forward and is an easy practice for untrained laborers, landowners and volunteer groups to complete.

- Layout a contour line on the slope with a hand level and wire flags.
- Dig a shallow depression, about two to three inches deep along the flag line
- Use the soil from the trench excavation to fill bags half to three-quarters full.
- Fold the top over and lay the filled bags end to end in the trench.
- Seat the bags with foot tamped backfill on the upstream side such that water flowing down the slope will not run under them.

What Materials are Needed?

- Sandbags
- Hand tools -shovels, pulaskis

How many sandbags are required?

The horizontal spacing of Contour Sandbags is determined with consideration for normal rainfall intensity, slope steepness, soil characteristics, and the extent of surface cover remaining after the fire. Figures 1 depicts the placement of sandbags on the slope. Table 1 shows recommended spacing for treating burn areas.

Fig. 1 - Typical contour sandbag installation

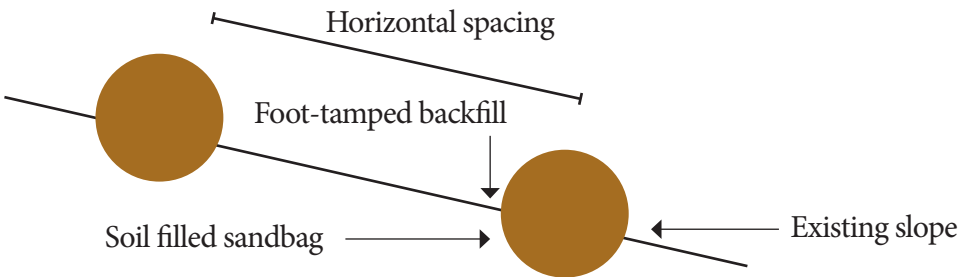


Table 1 - Recommended spacing for contour sandbags

Slope Steepness (percent)	Burn Intensity					
	Low Intensity		Moderate Intensity		Severe Intensity	
	Spacing (feet)	Quantity (bags/ acres)	Spacing (feet)	Quantity (bags/ acres)	Spacing (feet)	Quantity (bags/ acres)
< 5%	250	135	160	204	130	250
5 - 10%	200	164	120	272	90	364
10 - 20%	120	272	60	544	40	818
20 - 50%	60	544	30	1088	20	1634

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The methods described herein are exemplary only. Consult with a professional prior to making any changes in topography or installing or removing any structures. Serious harm to persons, property or the environment can occur. SRCD assumes no liability for actions taken based on the information provided herein.