

COMPOST PRODUCTS USED ON FIRE DAMAGED LAND

Each year thousands of acres in California are devastated by fires which destroy homes, and often result in erosion and sediment problems from burned areas.

Many of the fires occur on slopes where vegetation is essential for controlling erosion during rainfall events.

Types of compost products, what they do, and how they can be applied:

There are several different types of compost products, which can be applied in several ways:

- Blankets - compost blankets are mulches applied to the soil surface to protect and preserve it. Typically applied using blowers or by hand, compost is applied in a 1 to 2 inch layer. Blankets may or may not be vegetated. Vegetated blankets are usually seeded.
- Incorporated – compost can be incorporated with a tiller into the subsoil, and then seeded. This is an established practice in effective long-term erosion control.
- Filter berms and socks - are permeable barriers that effectively filter sediments.

Compost blankets and amendments control erosion by:

- Intercepting and absorbing falling rain reducing runoff and associated sediment losses;
- Providing an environment where seeds can germinate and grow to hold soils in place;
- Increasing water penetration into heavy soils.

To put it simply, even freshly applied unvegetated compost blankets can dramatically reduce erosion. Whether the compost is incorporated or applied as a blanket, soils treated with compost will also be richer in slow-release nutrients and will see improved water infiltration and retention, creating an environment where plants can thrive. Allowing the plants to develop a healthy, extensive, and deep root structure further improves soil structure to minimize or even prevent land erosion.

Filter berms and socks control erosion by:

- Slowing the movement of water so that sediments can settle out;
- Filtering water to remove pollutants; and
- Acting as barriers against the development of erosion rills and gullies.

WARNING: In order to ensure that the product used supports erosion control and does not increase sediment, follow these guidelines

- Do not apply raw, un-composted, green waste (i.e., grass clippings, leaf litter, etc.);
- Do not use plastic sheeting; and
- Ensure that compost meets appropriate quality specifications.

The 2008 Freeway Complex Fires and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region:

In November, 2008 the Freeway Complex Fires damaged land across California's Santa Ana Region. At its November 21, 2008 meeting, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region adopted an emergency resolution temporarily waiving the requirement of submitting a report of waste discharge when applying compost products.

The intent of this action is to provide another option to help control erosion from exposed burned slope areas in your communities. A copy of the resolution is available at:

www.waterboards.ca.gov/santaana/board_decisions/adopted_orders/orders/2008/08_0100_emergency_resolution_class_a_biosolid.pdf

If you are going to apply compost to land damaged in the Freeway Complex Fires you must:

- Follow the guidelines outlined by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region:
www.waterboards.ca.gov/santaana/resources/fire_assistance.shtml
- Complete a Notice of Intent (N.O.I.) before application. The N.O.I. form can be found on the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region's web site:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/santaana/resources/docs/NOI_R8-2008-0100_FINAL_rev.doc

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- Upon completion of the project, you must provide a Notice of Termination (N.O.T.) to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region, which can be found at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/santaana/resources/docs/NOT_R8-2008-0100_FINAL_rev.doc

Cutting costs when purchasing or supplying compost:

It is typically much more cost effective to purchase compost in bulk rather than bagged. Also, there are potential tax incentives for donating compost. However, in order to ensure the effectiveness of the compost for erosion control and environmental enhancement it is important to verify that all compost meets appropriate quality specifications.

Links to compost producers:

California Integrated Waste Management Board, Locating Compost and Mulch Facilities Database: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Organics/SupplierList/default.asp

US Composting Council (USCC) Seal of Testing Assurance (STA) Program Participants in California: www.compostingcouncil.org/programs/sta/participants.php

California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region

Fire Assistance & Cleanup Information: www.waterboards.ca.gov/santaana/resources/fire_assistance.shtml

Links to compost references:

Association of Compost Producers: <http://healthysoil.org/>

U.S. Composting Council: www.compostingcouncil.org/

California Integrated Waste Management Board: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Organics/CompostMulch/

Links to additional information:

United States Composting Council (USCC) Seal of Testing Assurance (STA) Program: www.compostingcouncil.org/programs/sta/

Caltrans Erosion Control Demonstration Projects: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/organics/Erosion/Demos/CalTrans.htm

California Integrated Waste Management Board/Caltrans Compost Specifications: www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/policy/compost_specs.htm

California Integrated Waste Management Board/Caltrans Erosion Control Workshops: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/organics/erosion/workshops/2007bmpct/Agenda.htm

California Integrated Waste Management Board "Compost Use for Landscape and Environmental Enhancement" Publication: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/publications/Organics/44207002.pdf

California Integrated Waste Management Board Waste Prevention Information Exchange: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WPIE/Compost/

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: <http://epa.gov/epawaste/conserves/tools/cpg/products/compost.htm>

California Integrated Waste Management Board Wildfire Preparedness: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Disaster/WildFires/default.htm

California Integrated Waste Management Board Contacts:

Organic Materials and Green Building Section: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Organics/Contacts.htm

Local Assistance and Market Development: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/OLA/Contacts.asp

Staff Assignments by Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) Jurisdiction: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LEACentral/CountyAssign.asp