

ADVISORY NOTE

CONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION OF DRILL PADS AND BENCHES

This advisory note outlines the approach for constructing drill pads and benches and their rehabilitation.

INTRODUCTION

Explorers are required under the *Mining Management Act 2001* to rehabilitate areas impacted by their activities. The main goal in environmental management of exploration activities is to minimise or prevent unnecessary impacts and rehabilitate sites where disturbance cannot be avoided.

Drill pads and benches are often the most visible evidence of mineral exploration activity. If allowed to remain unrehabilitated, they remain as scars on the landscape and have the potential to initiate erosion.

Drill pads and benches are to be constructed with a minimum of disturbance to the environment and rehabilitated in such a way as to promote revegetation and prevent the initiation of erosion. They should be constructed with prior planning so as to minimise the cost of rehabilitation and to reduce negative impacts on the environment.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Construction

- Drill pads and benches should be prepared with a minimum of disturbance and earthworks.
- Minimise vegetation removal by avoiding large trees and leave rootstock in ground to assist with stabilisation and regeneration.
- Clear and level the minimum area necessary for the work to be carried out safely.
- The dozing of earth and excavated material down steep slopes from which it cannot be readily recovered and the creation of hard bare rock areas which cannot support vegetation, should be avoided.
- If excavations are required, remove topsoil and stockpile for re-spreading on completion of the drilling program.
- The use of an excavator to assist in the construction of the pads is recommended on steep slopes to minimise earthworks and enable the storage of subsoil and top layer for later rehabilitation operations.
- The use of tracked drill rigs is strongly recommended at sites on steep terrain.

2. Rehabilitation

- Dependent on site condition and surrounding landscape, it may be necessary to conduct earthworks to stabilise and reshape the site. The site should be rehabilitated to as near original condition after completion of drilling operations.
- Ground which has become compacted by the use of heavy machinery and traffic should be ripped along contour (not downslope) to loosen soil to aid revegetation and minimise erosion.
- As much as is possible of the earth and overburden that was excavated from the pads and benches should be pushed, raked or pulled back over. The stockpiled topsoil and vegetation should be re-spread over the site.
- **All sample bags, waste materials and pollutants must be removed from site and disposed of in an appropriate manner.**
- The drill cuttings should be dispersed around the site or returned to the drill hole or sump.
- Drill sumps should be backfilled with the excavated material and respread with stored topsoil.
- Permanent survey markers should be kept to a minimum and wooden pegs should be used in preference to steel pegs.
- Tracks constructed to access the drill site should be rehabilitated as per the Department's advisory note for the Rehabilitation of Grid Lines and Tracks.

For further information or advice on this subject please contact

Mining Performance
Department of Resources
GPO Box 3000, Darwin, Northern Territory 0801
Phone : +61 8 8999 6528
E-mail : mineral.info@nt.gov.au

Fax : +61 8 8999 6527
Website: www.minerals.nt.gov.au