

## DON'T GET CAUGHT IN THE COLD: BUTTON UP FOR BEST RESULTS

Though the weather in the Panhandle has been quite nice this commencement of Fall, as we all know, it can be quick to change. The “wet season” has arrived even if it doesn’t seem like it quite yet (October 1-April 30). The best thing to do for you construction site is to be prepared! Winter is on her way.

If uncovered, soil on-site can run off during the winter and cause all kinds of issues—whether they are in the form of angry neighbors, muddy streets, or murky streams. In addition to protecting resources and friendly relationships with your neighbors, buttoning up your site for the winter is probably the best thing for your project. Construction is significantly limited in the wet season by the added requirements for erosion and sediment controls. Projects that extend into the winter must go beyond basic plans to anticipate needing extraordinary measures (and higher costs).

In order to reduce the amount and duration of soil exposed to erosion by wind, precipitation, runoff, and vehicle tracking, scheduling is of the utmost importance. The folks at SEEP (the Stormwater and Erosion Education Program) recommend avoiding or minimizing any land-disturbing activities between the months of October-May. In North Idaho, the ideal grading period is during the summer months. If you must continue grading during the rainy season, the length of time that the soil is exposed (as well as the total area exposed) must be minimized to keep the soil on your site.



### If at all possible, don't get caught in the cold. Button up your site for the winter!

*Kenny Hicks, a general contractor out of Oswald, Idaho (K.E. Hicks & Associates) provides some tips for buttoning up your construction site for the wet season:*

- ❶ Check all of the perimeter lines for possible run-on (and runoff).
- ❷ It may be necessary to refresh the rock construction entrance (you'll be glad in the early spring).
- ❸ Check all of the drain ditches (both temporary and permanent) and dams (remove excessive sediment).
- ❹ Keep a couple bails of straw and wattles available in case they are needed before the rain turns to snow.
- ❺ After the snow begins to fall, try to stay out of the site. If you stay out and let the snow melt naturally in the spring you will decrease the movement of sediment. Remember: wheel tracks in the snow on sloppy ground become the first rill erosion (when shallow sheets of water start to gather in low spots on the surface of the land) in the spring.
- ❻ If you were working large sites, make sure there is a catch basin at all low areas for water retention/detention.
- ❼ Review the summer's Erosion & Sediment Control (ESC) Plan inspection sheets; identify and reevaluate all problem-areas listed.
- ❽ Check all new revegetated areas for healthy growth. Cover any bare or thin areas with mulch or straw.

*If it is not possible to shut down your site for the wet season, there are some very important factors to consider. At SEEP, we are very big believers in “phasing” (stabilizing one areas of development before moving on to another). Be sure that you're not stuck in a squall, and are thoroughly ready for whatever kind of winter comes your way.*

**For wet season construction, there are five very important factors to consider:**

- ❶ Minimize disturbed areas.
- ❷ Emphasize source control.
  - \*Prevention is the best way to approach drainage problems.
  - \*Reduce erosion by keeping runoff velocity low.
  - \*Avoid concentrated runoff over covered areas.
- ❸ Minimize the extent and duration of area exposed.
  - \*Cover all disturbed areas.
- ❹ Retain sediment on site.
  - \*Where areas are selectively being worked, intercept runoff and remove sediments by using filtration, settling basins, or pumping to vegetated areas.
- ❺ Monitor your site regularly.
  - \*Maintain all erosion and sediment control BMPs.
  - \*Replace or repair any failing BMPs.

Once the ground freezes, you lose your most cost-effective erosion and stormwater controls. Don't be sorry next spring.

*“I try to never clear and grub more than I can stabilize, protect or capture in one construction season,” advises Hicks. “Remember, if you loose all your topsoil (sediment) you are going to have a tough time revegetating the site.”*

Have a great winter (off) and think about signing up for SEEP in the spring! You'll learn about erosion and sediment control and Best Management Practices for all kinds of applications; you'll also get to network with other professionals in the field and be prepared for the weather! (<http://www.plrcd.org/SEEP>)



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