

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
ILLINOIS URBAN MANUAL  
PRACTICE STANDARD

**Level Spreader**

(no.)

Code 870



Source: Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook

**Definition**

A device used to disperse concentrated runoff uniformly over the ground surface as sheet flow.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this practice is to convert concentrated, potentially erosive flow to sheet flow and release it uniformly over a stabilized area or filter strip. The resultant sheet flow enhances pollutant filtering and runoff infiltration and reduces the potential for erosion.

**Conditions Where Practice Applies**

The principal application of a level spreader is to convey runoff from impervious surfaces, such as parking lots or roadways, uniformly onto vegetated filter strips. Level spreaders can also be applied as outlets for diversion structures. Level spreaders are appropriate and/or necessary under the following conditions:

1. Where runoff from an impervious surface is uneven and/or runoff is released as concentrated flow, such as through curb cuts or roof downspouts
2. At the ends of diversions
3. Where the runoff water will not re-concentrate after release from the level spreader until it reaches an outlet designed for concentrated flow
4. Where sediment-free storm runoff can be released in sheet flow down a stabilized slope without causing erosion
5. Where the lip of the level spreader can be constructed in undisturbed soil
6. Where there will be no traffic over the spreader

### **Criteria**

Criteria for level spreader design can vary greatly depending on the application. For this reason, two sets of criteria are specified for several of the factors that follow.

#### **For impervious surface runoff applications:**

The capacity for the level spreader is determined in the design of the filter strip to which it discharges (see Practice Standard [FILTER STRIP 835](#)).

The spreader shall run linearly along the entire width of the filter strip to which it discharges. In most cases, the spreader will be the same width as the contributing impervious surface. The ends of the spreader shall be tied into higher ground to prevent flow around the spreader.

The minimum depth shall be 6 inches and the minimum width shall be 6 feet for the lower side slope. Side slopes shall be 2:1 (horizontal to vertical) or flatter.

The grade of the spreader shall be 0%.

The discharge area shall meet the requirements of Practice Standard [FILTER STRIP 835](#).

*For diversion outlet applications:*

The capacity of the spreader shall be determined using the peak flow from the 10-year frequency, 24-hour duration storm. The drainage area shall be restricted so that maximum flows into the spreader will not exceed 30 cfs.

Spreader dimensions: Select the length and depth of the spreader from the table below. The length dimension is parallel to the diversion.

<b>Design Flow (cfs)</b>	<b>Minimum Depth (ft.)</b>	<b>Minimum Length (ft.)</b>
0 – 10	0.5	10
10 – 20	0.6	20
20 – 30	0.7	30

The minimum width of the spreader shall be 6 feet for the lower side slope. Side slopes shall be 2:1 (horizontal to vertical) or flatter.

Construct a 20-foot transition section in the diversion channel so the width of the channel will smoothly meet the width of the spreader to ensure uniform outflow.

The last 20 feet of the diversion channel shall provide a smooth transition from the channel grade to the level spreader and where possible, shall be less than or equal to 1%. The grade of the level spreader shall be 0%.

The outlet discharge area must be generally smooth and well vegetated with a maximum slope of 10%.

*For all applications:*

The spreader lip shall be constructed to a uniform height and zero grade over the length of the spreader. For design flows of 4 cfs or greater, a rigid lip of non-erodible material, such as pressure-

treated timbers or concrete curbing, shall be used. For flows less than 4 cfs, a vegetated lip may be used. The spreader lip shall be constructed on undisturbed soil.

When using a vegetated lip, it shall be protected with an erosion control blanket to prevent erosion and allow the vegetation to become established. The erosion control blanket for a vegetated lip shall meet the requirements of Practice Standard [EROSION BLANKET 830](#). The blanket shall be a minimum of 4 feet wide extending a minimum of 1 foot downstream over the level lip. The blanket shall be secured with heavy duty staples and the downstream and upstream edges shall be buried at least 6 inches deep in a vertical trench.

When using a rigid lip, it shall be entrenched at least 4 inches below existing ground and securely anchored to prevent displacement. An apron of coarse aggregate meeting IDOT CA-1 or CA-3 gradation shall be placed to the top of the rigid lip and extend downslope at least 3 feet. A filter fabric shall be placed under the coarse aggregate. The filter fabric shall meet the requirements of Material Specification [GEOTEXTILE 592 Table 1 or 2, Class I, II, or IV](#).

Immediately after level spreader construction, seed and mulch the entire disturbed area of the spreader. Seeding shall meet the requirements of Practice Standard [PERMANENT VEGETATION 880](#) and mulching shall meet the requirements of Practice Standard [MULCHING FOR SEEDING AND SOIL STABILIZATION 875](#).

### **Considerations**

The level spreader is a relatively low-cost structure to:

1. Disperse impervious surface runoff uniformly to a filter strip or;
2. Release small volumes of concentrated flow from diversions when conditions are suitable

To accomplish these purposes, particular care must be taken to construct the spreader lip completely level. Any depressions in the lip will concentrate the flow, resulting in a loss of pollutant filtering effectiveness and/or erosion. Evaluate the outlet system to be sure that flow does not concentrate below the outlet.

For filter strip applications, the determination of whether a level spreader is needed should be based on how the runoff is entering the filter strip. If the runoff is concentrated by curb cuts, and particularly if a large area of impervious surface drains to one point, a level spreader is essential to achieve effective pollutant removal in the filter strip. A level spreader also is important if the filter strip is relatively steep in order to avoid erosion from concentrated runoff discharge. If the runoff is evenly distributed over the width of the impervious surface (e.g., a curbless, even-sloped road or parking lot), a level spreader may not be necessary.

When the level spreader is used as an outlet for temporary or permanent diversions and diversion dikes, runoff containing high sediment loads must be treated in a sediment trapping device such as Practice Standard [TEMPORARY SEDIMENT TRAP 960](#) or **IMPOUNDMENT STRUCTURE – ROUTED 842** before release into a level spreader.

### **Plans and Specifications**

Plans and specifications for installing a level spreader shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose. At a minimum include the following items:

1. The spreader location
2. The length and width
3. For filter strip applications, plans for both the adjacent impervious surface and the filter strip, for diversion outlets, plans detailing the diversion structure and the adjacent outlet area
4. Lip details: vegetated or rigid

5. Stone gradation
6. Filter fabric specifications if used
7. Rigid lip material specifications if used
8. Erosion control blanket specifications if used
9. Seeding and mulching requirements

All plans shall include installation, inspection, and maintenance schedules with the responsible party identified.

Standard Drawing [LEVEL SPREADER IL-570](#) may be used as the plan sheet.

### **Operation and Maintenance**

Inspect level spreaders after every rainfall until vegetation is established, and promptly make needed repairs.

After the area has been stabilized, make periodic inspections and maintain vegetation in a healthy, vigorous condition.

Verify that the level spreader is distributing flow evenly. If problems are noted, make appropriate modifications to ensure even flow distribution.

### **References**

- Illinois Department of Transportation, 1997. Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. IL
- North Carolina Sedimentation Control Commission, 1988. Erosion and Sediment Control Planning and Design Manual. NC
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Soil and Water Conservation, 1992. Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., VA

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