



ADMINISTRATIVE RULES OF MONTANA

17.24.107 RECLAMATION REQUIREMENTS--EXPLORATION

- (1) Upon completion of the drilling operation, drill cuttings or core must be removed from the site, disposed of down the hole, or buried. Drilling mud and other nontoxic lubricants must be removed from the site or allowed to percolate into the ground prior to backfilling the sump.
- (2) Unless the hole is completed under ARM 17.24.106(3)(c), collar pipe or casing must be removed or cut off below ground level.
- (3) Access roads constructed by the licensee to accommodate the exploration project must be returned to a stable slope that approximates the original contour to the extent possible. Where this is not possible (as determined by the department), compacted surfaces must be ripped or otherwise loosened, drainage structures must be installed in accordance with ARM 17.24.104(11), and the roads must be closed to access by use of locked gates, kelly humps/dips, or other effective method. Exceptions may be made in accordance with the provisions of ARM 17.24.103(3). This requirement may be waived by the department if the landowner requests in writing that the access road be left in place for an identified, alternative, feasible and practicable purpose.
- (4) Drill sites constructed by the licensee must be returned to a stable configuration that approximates the original contour to the extent possible. Where the department determines that this is not possible, compacted surfaces must be ripped or otherwise loosened and appropriate drainage must be provided. This requirement may be waived by the department if the landowner requests in writing that the drill site be left in place for an identified, feasible and practicable purpose.
- (5) All trenches, bulk sample or discovery pits, and other excavations must be backfilled with the excavated spoil material unless the backfilling will physically hinder the further development of the claim or obscure evidence of an ore deposit. If, following a site investigation and discussions with the licensee, the department confirms the necessity for the excavation to remain open, backfilling requirements may be postponed if the licensee remains in compliance with 82-4-331, and 82-4-332, MCA, and ARM 17.24.103, 17.24.105, and 17.24.153.
- (6) Upon termination of the exploration project, the first 25 feet of all adits must be backfilled with waste rock or riprap which will not contribute to the degradation of any discharge water. Shafts must also be backfilled or otherwise securely sealed upon project termination. If, following a site investigation and discussions with the licensee, the department confirms the necessity for an adit or shaft to remain accessible for possible future exploration or development, the adit or shaft must be secured with a steel bulkhead or other equally effective method to prevent unauthorized entry and ensure public safety.
- (7) All refuse, buildings, railroad track, and other facilities associated with the exploration project must be removed and disposed of in proper disposal sites. Exceptions may be made by the

department if the licensee desires to mine the area and is in compliance with 82-4-332 (4) , MCA. This requirement may also be waived by the department if the landowner requests in writing that specific facilities be left in place for an identified, alternative, feasible and practicable purpose.

- (8) All compacted surfaces associated with exploration adits, shafts, pits and associated facilities shall be ripped or otherwise loosened prior to soil replacement.
- (9) Unless other reclamation practices are approved by the department, waste dumps associated with new adits excavated for the purposes of underground exploration must be contoured to allow for soil replacement and successful vegetation establishment. When existing, caved (sloughed) adits are reopened for the purposes of exploration and the caved material can be confined to the existing portal pad or waste dump without requiring expansion, contouring is not required. However, the licensee shall provide for appropriate drainage in the portal area, and the portal pad and waste dump must be stabilized with vegetation or by employing other stabilization methods determined acceptable by the department.
- (10) Where feasible, soil and soil materials salvaged during construction must be reapplied over all disturbance areas.
- (11) Where feasible, all disturbed areas must be revegetated with a seed mixture that is approved by the department.
- (12) Appropriate revegetation must be accomplished as soon after necessary grading as possible; however, revegetation must be performed in the proper season in accordance with accepted agricultural and reforestation practices.
- (13) In the event that any of the above revegetation efforts are unsuccessful, the licensee must seek the advice of the department and make a second attempt, incorporating such changes and additional procedures as may be expected to provide satisfactory revegetation.

Authorizing statute(s): 82-4-321, MCA

Implementing statute(s): 82-4-332, MCA

History: Eff. 12/31/72; AMD, 1994 MAR p. 2952, Eff. 11/11/94; TRANS, from DSL, 1996 MAR p. 2852; AMD, 2022 MAR p. 1830, Eff. 9/24/22; AMD, 2024 MAR p. 1060, Eff. 5/11/24.