

## **Activities 130 through 139 Roadside and Vegetation General Instructions**

Work under this section includes:

- Management of vegetation (grass, weeds, brush, trees, etc.). Refer to further discussion below and in Activities 130, 131, 132, and 133.
- Cleanup of litter. Refer to further discussion below and in Activities 134 and 135.
- Maintenance of landscaped areas. Refer to Activity 136.
- Maintenance of roadside rest areas. Refer to Activity 137.
- Maintenance of fences. Refer to Activity 138.
- Miscellaneous activities related to roadside and vegetation. Refer to Activity 139.

Also refer to discussion below and:

- The Control of Erosion, Sedimentation, and Pollutants or Contaminants section of this Guide and Activity 122 for discussion on erosion and related topics.
- The Emergency Operations and Incident Response and the Crashes, Injuries, and Damage to Property sections of this Guide for discussion on crashes, damage to ODOT property, and potentially harmful materials or situations that may result.
- The Emergency Operations and Incident Response section of this Guide for discussion on vehicles that have been abandoned along the roadway.
- The Use of ODOT Property by Permit section of this Guide for discussion on activities or installations that may be permitted.
- The *ODOT Routine Road Maintenance Water Quality and Habitat Guide Best Management Practices*.

Prior to beginning work, determine right of way width or ownership of the land. When work involves highways on lands managed by the US Forest Service, refer to the Memorandum of Understanding Related to Highways Over National Forest Lands executed by ODOT and the USDA Forest Service.

Before beginning any excavation work in areas where utility or other non-ODOT facilities could be buried, contact the Oregon Utility Notification Center (OUNC) so the facility owners can mark the location of their facilities.

Work under this series of activities may involve areas that contain endangered species. Refer to the *Resource Area Maps* and comply with all restrictions for work in those areas. Seek assistance from the District Manager and the Region Environmental Coordinator as needed.

ODOT manages vegetation along state highways and on other ODOT property for several reasons including:

- To provide adequate sight distance for motorists.
- To minimize objects within the clear zone of the roadway as much as possible. Also refer to discussion below about the clear zone.
- To remove danger trees.

- To control noxious weeds, undesirable vegetation, and other detrimental growth of vegetation.
- To reduce ice problems that may result from trees or vegetation shading the roadway.
- To reduce the number and extent of snow drifts that are caused by uncontrolled grass, weeds, and brush.
- To control erosion, sedimentation, and pollutants or contaminants.
- To promote the establishment and growth of preferred species.
- To minimize danger of fire spreading from the roadway to surrounding areas.
- To enhance aesthetics and control undesirable vegetation in maintained landscaped areas.

### General Guidance

Maintain roadsides and vegetation:

- Generally in a clean, neat, attractive, and safe condition.
- Within the general guidelines and physical limits described in each Activity description.
- At the levels as allowed by the current performance budget and as described in the *Desired Conditions of Maintenance Features on State Highways*.

Woody material, such as tree sprouts and seedlings, should be treated before it reaches 6" DBH (diameter at breast height). Trees larger than 6" DBH are removed under Activity 133.

Avoid:

- Mowing or removing vegetation that does not need to be controlled or removed
- Removing vegetation too low to the ground since that could:
  - Require work beyond that needed to fulfill the appropriate conditions of maintenance.
  - Damage the vegetation and encourage unwanted growth.
  - Reduce the ability of the vegetation to control erosion or sedimentation.
  - Cause excessive damage to equipment.

The clear zone, as mentioned above and as defined in the *AASHTO Roadside Design Guide* and the *ODOT Highway Design Manual*, is the roadside border area that is available for safe use by errant vehicles. Several factors affect the width of the preferred clear zone, including design speed, design average daily traffic, horizontal curvature, and embankment slope. Generally and where practical, a clear zone of 10 meters (approximately 30 feet) from the edge of travel lane is desirable.

Since the owner of adjacent property is responsible to control fire on that property, ODOT does not need to remove or otherwise control vegetation on ODOT property to help prevent spread of fire from adjacent property. Do not allow firebreaks that remove all flammable material for protection of adjacent land to be constructed on ODOT property. Such use of ODOT property by others is not appropriate. This type of firebreak may also destroy wanted vegetation and may promote erosion.

If a vehicle has been apparently abandoned on ODOT property, refer to discussion in the Emergency Operations and Incident Response section of this Guide.

As for all maintenance activities, maintain roadsides and vegetation in a manner that prevents or controls erosion and sedimentation, including:

- Implement appropriate methods to control erosion and sedimentation. Also refer to discussion in the Control of Erosion, Sedimentation, and Pollutants or Contaminants section of this Guide. Abide by the practices described in the *ODOT Routine Road Maintenance Water Quality and Habitat Guide Best Management Practices*.
- Avoid mowing or removing vegetation that does not need to be controlled.
- Avoid removing vegetation too low to the ground since that could:
  - Scalp the ground, potentially increasing erosion.
  - Reduce the value of the remaining growth for protecting the soil from erosion.
- Prevent the operation of equipment on steep slopes or in such a manner that it damages, destroys, or loosens vegetation or its roots.

Implement and maintain permanent erosion control methods as discussed in Activity 122.

To manage brush and trees less than 6" DBH, ODOT and each District Manager should develop an Integrated Vegetation Management Program. Part of that program requires the District Manager to prepare and annually update an Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) Plan, with assistance and guidance from the Vegetation Management Coordinator in the Office of Maintenance, that includes:

- Goals and objectives of the IVM Plan.
- Maps of roads and management zones within the district.
- Methods, with specific areas, locations, and physical limits identified as necessary, to be used to control vegetation.
- Information to be recorded and reports of vegetation management work to be prepared.

The IVM Plan should also refer to the *ODOT Routine Road Maintenance Water Quality and Habitat Guide Best Management Practices* referenced above and incorporate needed practices.

The IVM Plan should identify methods to control noxious weeds identified in ODOT's Cooperative Agreement with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. ODOT generally engages the Oregon Department of Agriculture to control noxious weeds. If ODOT performs this work, properly record the costs incurred with the appropriate TEAMS Activity under Activity 131, 136, or 137.

Consult the ODOT Forester in the Office of Maintenance for advice on dealing with trees over 6" DBH including determining trees to be controlled, proper methods to control the trees, and falling trees. The ODOT Forester will coordinate the removal of trees that may have merchantable value.

ODOT generally uses one of the following four methods to manage vegetation:

- Mechanical. Refer to discussion in Activities 130, 132, and 133.
- Chemical. Refer to discussion in Activity 131.
- Biological, which would use a natural predator to control specific vegetation. This would be described in the IVM Plan. ODOT generally engages the Oregon Department of Agriculture to perform biological management. If ODOT performs this work, refer to Activity 139.
- Cultural, which would use native or other plant material to out-compete specific vegetation. This also would be described in the IVM Plan and would be performed either under Activity 139 or 304.

ODOT's Special Management Area Program administered by the Geo/Hydro/Environmental Section of the Technical Services Branch identifies species of vegetation, animals, or other life on ODOT property that are threatened or endangered. Incorporate specific actions into the IVM Plan, and/or modify maintenance practices, to properly protect the threatened or endangered species.