



# TECHNICAL NOTE

Minimum and Maximum Cover Heights for Single Wall Corrugated HDPE Pipe

TN 2.03  
May 2020

## Introduction

The information in this document is designed to provide answers to general cover height questions; the data provided is not intended to be used for project design. The design procedure described in the *Structures* section (Section 2) of the Drainage Handbook provides detailed information for analyzing most common installation conditions. This procedure should be utilized for project specific designs.

The two common cover height concerns are minimum cover in areas exposed to vehicular traffic and maximum cover heights. Either may be considered "worst case" scenario from a loading perspective, depending on the project conditions.

## Minimum Cover in Traffic Applications

Pipe diameters from 3- through 24-inch (75-600 mm) installed in traffic areas (AASHTO H-25 or HS-25 loads) must have at least one foot (0.3m) of cover over the pipe crown. The backfill envelope must be constructed in accordance with the *Installation* section (Section 5) of the Drainage Handbook and the requirements of ASTM D2321. The backfill envelope must be of the type and compaction listed in Table 2-3 of the Drainage Handbook. In Table 1 below, this condition is represented by a Class III material compacted to 90% standard Proctor density, although other material can provide similar strength at slightly lower levels of compaction. Structural backfill material should extend to the crown of the pipe; the remaining cover should be appropriate for the installation and as specified by the design engineer. If settlement or rutting is a concern, it may be appropriate to extend the structural backfill to grade. Where pavement is involved, sub-base material can be considered in the minimum burial depth. While rigid pavements can be included in the minimum cover, the thickness of flexible pavements should not be included in the minimum cover.

Additional information that may affect the cover requirements is included in the *Installation* section (Section 5) of the Drainage Handbook. Some examples of what may need to be considered are temporary heavy equipment, construction loading, paving equipment and similar loads that are less than the design load, the potential of pipe flotation, and the type of surface treatment which will be installed over the pipe zone.

**Table 1**  
**Minimum Cover Requirements for ADS Single Wall Highway and Heavy Duty Pipe with AASHTO H-25 or HS-25 Load**

Inside Diameter, ID, in.(mm)	Minimum Cover ft. (m)	Inside Diameter, ID, in.(mm)	Minimum Cover ft. (m)
3 (75)	1 (0.3)	24 (600)	1 (0.3)
4 (100)	1 (0.3)	12 (300)	1 (0.3)
6 (150)	1 (0.3)	15 (375)	1 (0.3)
8 (200)	1 (0.3)	18 (450)	1 (0.3)
10 (250)	1 (0.3)		

*Note: Minimum covers presented here were calculated assuming Class III backfill material compacted to 90% standard Proctor density around the pipe and structural backfill to the crown of the pipe, as recommended in Section 5 of the Drainage Handbook, with an additional layer of compacted traffic lane sub-base for a total cover as required. In shallow traffic installations, especially where pavement is involved, a good quality compacted material to grade is required to prevent surface settlement and rutting.*



# Maximum Cover

Wall thrust generally governs the maximum cover a pipe can withstand and conservative maximum cover heights will result when using the information presented in the *Structures* section (Section 2) of the Drainage Handbook.

The maximum burial depth is highly influenced by the type of backfill and level of compaction around the pipe. General maximum cover limits for ADS Single Wall Highway and Heavy Duty pipes are shown in Table 2 for a variety of backfill conditions.

Table 2 was developed assuming pipe is installed in accordance with ASTM D2321 and the *Installation* section (Section 5) of the Drainage Handbook. Additionally, the calculations; assume zero hydrostatic load, incorporate the maximum safety factors represented in structures section of the Drainage Handbook, and assume the native soil is of adequate strength and is suitable for installation. For applications requiring fill heights greater than those shown in Table 2, contact the ADS Regional Engineering or Application Engineering departments.

**Table 2**  
**Maximum Cover for ADS Single Wall Heavy Duty and Highway Pipe, ft (m)**

Diameter in (mm)	Class 1		Class 2			Class 3		
	Compacted	Dumped	95%	90%	85%	95%	90%	85%
4 (100)	41 (12.5)	13 (4.0)	27 (8.2)	18 (5.5)	13 (4.0)	19 (5.8)	13 (4.0)	11 (3.9)
6 (150)								
8 (200)	38 (11.6)	12 (3.7)	25 (7.6)	17 (5.2)	12 (3.7)	18 (5.5)	12 (3.7)	10 (3.0)
10 (250)								
12 (300)								
15 (375)								
18 (450)								
24 (600)	32 (9.8)	11 (3.4)	21 (6.4)	15 (4.6)	11 (3.4)	16 (4.9)	11 (3.4)	9 (2.7)

**Notes:**

1. Results based on calculations shown in the Structures section of the ADS Drainage Handbook. Calculations assume no hydrostatic pressure and a density of 120 pcf (1926 kg/m<sup>3</sup>) for overburden material.
2. Installation assumed to be in accordance with ASTM D2321 and the Installation section of the Drainage Handbook.
3. Backfill materials and compaction levels not shown in the table may also be acceptable. Contact ADS for further detail.
4. Material must be adequately "knifed" into haunch and in between corrugations. Compaction and backfill material is assumed uniform throughout entire backfill zone.
5. Compaction levels shown are for standard Proctor density.
6. For projects where cover exceeds the maximum values listed above, contact ADS for specific design considerations.
7. Calculations assume no hydrostatic pressure. Hydrostatic pressure will result in a reduction in allowable fill height. Reduction in allowable fill height must be assessed by the design engineer for the specific field conditions.
8. Fill height for dumped Class I material incorporate an additional degree of conservatism that is difficult to assess due to the large degree of variation in the consolidation of this material as it is dumped. There is limited analytical data on its performance. For this reason, values as shown are estimated to be conservatively equivalent to Class 2, 85% SPD.