

Runoff Coefficient (C) Fact Sheet

What is It?

The runoff coefficient (C) is a dimensionless coefficient relating the amount of runoff to the amount of precipitation received. It is a larger value for areas with low infiltration and high runoff (pavement, steep gradient), and lower for permeable, well vegetated areas (forest, flat land).

Why is It Important?

It is important for flood control channel construction and for possible flood zone hazard delineation. A high runoff coefficient (C) value may indicate flash flooding areas during storms as water moves fast overland on its way to a river channel or a valley floor.

How is It Measured?

It is measured by determining the soil type, gradient, permeability and land use. The values are taken from the table below. The larger values correspond to higher runoff and lower infiltration.

Land Use	C	Land Use	C
Business: Downtown areas Neighborhood areas	0.70 - 0.95 0.50 - 0.70	Lawns:	
		Sandy soil, flat, 2%	0.05 - 0.10
		Sandy soil, avg., 2-7%	0.10 - 0.15
		Sandy soil, steep, 7%	0.15 - 0.20
Residential: Single-family areas Multi units, detached Munti units, attached Suburban	0.30 - 0.50 0.40 - 0.60 0.60 - 0.75 0.25 - 0.40	Heavy soil, flat, 2%	0.13 - 0.17
		Heavy soil, avg., 2-7%	0.18 - 0.22
		Heavy soil, steep, 7%	0.25 - 0.35
		Agricultural land:	
		<i>Bare packed soil</i>	
		*Smooth	0.30 - 0.60
		*Rough	0.20 - 0.50
		<i>Cultivated rows</i>	
		*Heavy soil, no crop	0.30 - 0.60
		*Heavy soil, with crop	0.20 - 0.50
*Sandy soil, no crop	0.20 - 0.40		
*Sandy soil, with crop	0.10 - 0.25		
		<i>Pasture</i>	
		*Heavy soil	0.15 - 0.45
		*Sandy soil	0.05 - 0.25
		Woodlands	0.05 - 0.25

<i>Industrial:</i> Light areas Heavy areas	0.50 - 0.80 0.60 - 0.90	<i>Streets:</i> Asphaltic Concrete Brick	0.70 - 0.95 0.80 - 0.95 0.70 - 0.85
Parks, cemeteries	0.10 - 0.25	Unimproved areas	0.10 - 0.30
Playgrounds	0.20 - 0.35	Drives and walks	0.75 - 0.85
Railroad yard areas	0.20 - 0.40	Roofs	0.75 - 0.95

Note: The designer must use judgment to select the appropriate "C" value within the range. Generally, larger areas with permeable soils, flat slopes and dense vegetation should have the lowest "C" values. Smaller areas with dense soils, moderate to steep slopes, and sparse vegetation should assigned the highest "C" values.

<http://water.me.vccs.edu/courses/CIV246/table2b.htm> accessed 11/19/09