

Marc Miller

The use of internal drains for dams and appurtenant structures is a common industry practice that is used to relieve piezometric pressure and control seepage. These drains often include a slotted or perforated pipe network to improve water collection and conveyance, and the size of the pipe openings is dependent on the type granular medium used for pipe embedment. Clogging of these openings reduces their efficiency and can lead to undesirable pressure increases that introduce performance uncertainties and a reduction in dam safety. The industry has been trending away from the use of slotted pipes with small openings due to concerns that these smaller slots are prone to mechanical clogging when filter sand is used as the embedment medium. Although this concern is widely accepted, a review of published case studies indicates that these findings are generally anecdotal in nature. This paper presents the results of a study of mechanical clogging of slotted pipes with small openings. The study considers differing slot opening sizes and filter media gradations under various head conditions, and describes the observed clogging mechanisms. The paper also discusses the application of the study findings to the use of slotted pipes for vertical applications, such as relief wells.