Standard Fence Company Updates Post Setting for Expansive Soil

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DENVER, CO - September 02, 2026 -
Standard Fence Company has updated its post setting specifications for properties built on expansive clay soil, applying deeper footings, drainage provisions and revised post material selection across its Front Range service area following the Colorado Geological Survey's second edition guidance on swelling soil.

The change reflects a hazard the state has documented for decades but which is rarely applied to fencing. The Colorado Geological Survey describes swelling clays as one of the most significant, widespread and costly, but least publicized, geologic hazards in Colorado. Although only half of the 30 sedimentary bedrock formations exposed in the Front Range Urban Corridor contain swelling clay, the agency notes that those swelling formations underlie all of the major cities in the corridor. The corridor covers the foothills and piedmont area from Fort Collins and Greeley in the north to Pueblo and Canon City in the south, an area that includes more than 80 percent of the state's population.

The mechanism is seasonal rather than constant. According to the Colorado Geological Survey, swelling is generally caused by expansion due to wetting of certain clay minerals in dry soils, which is why arid and semiarid areas such as Colorado experience a much higher frequency of swelling problems than eastern states with higher rainfall. Soils developed from swelling clays increase in volume on exposure to moisture, then contract as they dry. The agency has documented the resulting damage to sidewalks, streets and building foundations across the metropolitan area.

That cycle is the reason fence posts behave differently in Denver than in wetter regions. A post sits in the zone of soil that gains and loses moisture seasonally, without a slab or foundation above it to distribute the movement. Repeated expansion and contraction gradually loosens the footing. The visible symptoms tend to appear at the panel line rather than at the post, which is why property owners often attribute a leaning fence to wind or to age rather than to the ground beneath it.

"The soil under a fence line is not static, and the irrigation pattern in a yard often matters more than the weather does," said Taylor Scavo, President of Standard Fence Company. "A sprinkler head that wets the same three posts every evening through a dry summer is putting those posts through a cycle the rest of the fence never sees. When someone calls about a section that is leaning while the rest of the run is fine, that is usually where the answer is."

The updated specification calls for post depth measured against the local frost line rather than applied uniformly, drainage material at the base of each hole to limit moisture accumulation around the footing, and post material selected for the soil profile rather than for the panel style alone. Steel post systems and reinforced vinyl posts are specified where soil movement is a documented factor, since neither takes up moisture the way untreated wood does. The company has also revised how it evaluates existing fence lines, distinguishing between individual posts that require resetting and longer sections where a modified footing approach across the run is the more durable outcome.

Site conditions vary considerably within short distances. Colorado Geological Survey studies of soil and bedrock in the Denver area have found that engineering properties of soil, surficial deposits and bedrock vary significantly both laterally and vertically, which is why the agency recommends site specific investigation rather than area wide assumptions. The same variability appears across a single residential lot, where one section of a fence line can sit on materially different ground than another.

The Colorado Geological Survey publishes a consumer guide to swelling soil for Colorado homebuyers and homeowners, now in its second edition, which includes visual indicators property owners can check without specialized equipment. The agency notes that soil containing swelling clay is very sticky when wet and may show cracks or a puffy popcorn texture when dry, while also cautioning that deeper layers of swelling soil can be present beneath a property with no surface indication.

Standard Fence Company expects the specification change to affect residential installations most directly, though the same soil conditions apply to commercial perimeters and to longer agricultural runs where post spacing already carries greater load. The company is applying the updated approach to new installations and to assessments of existing fence lines across the Denver metropolitan area and the surrounding Front Range counties it serves.

Standard Fence Company is a fourth-generation family-owned fence contractor holding a BBB A+ rating and serving residential and commercial properties across Colorado's Front Range. The company installs wood, vinyl, chain link, composite, ornamental iron, ornamental aluminum, brick and precast fencing, along with gate installation, gate operators and access control systems, and temporary fencing for construction sites and events.

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Standard Fence Company

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