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Act early to repair winter pavement damage: Attaining the longest life from your pavement

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Once snowfall has come to our region, there is little that can be done to protect your valuable pavement investment against the ravages of winter. Fortunately crack sealing, which is a highly cost-effective method for preventing water penetration of asphalt surfaces, is a procedure that can be done just as soon as the snow melts and will effectively halt winter pavement damage from spreading.

Water Penetration is the Problem

Water penetration through cracks in asphalt is a destructive process anytime of the year. As water reaches the base and subgrade, the wet soil gives way under the weight of passing vehicles, causing settlement and breaking of the asphalt above, eventually resulting in potholes.

During the winter months this water damage is greatly accelerated through freeze-thaw cycles as the wedging action of ice expands small cracks into larger breaks and spider-web cracked areas, allowing increasing amounts of water to reach the base. Over the course of a winter, an area of seemingly insignificant cracks can develop into gaping potholes with remarkable speed, inviting serious liability issues.

Crack Sealing is One Answer

The best protection against water penetration is sealing all cracks with a hot-applied rubberized joint sealant that meets federal specifications. The superior flexibility and durability of this product, even at very low temperatures, allows it to block water seepage through cracks even under the harshest winter conditions.

If isolated areas exist where pavement damage is too extensive to be crack sealed, those areas should be cut square, ripped out, regraded, and then repaved with 1.5" of bituminous binder, followed 1.5" of bituminous topcoat asphalt to provide a new, fresh surface. The edges should be emulsified to bond the new pavement to the existing ensuring a seamless transition.

Cut and Patch Areas of Broken Pavement

Some property owners and managers faced with a few areas of broken or cracked pavement in an otherwise sound parking surface often tend to defer repair of these conditions until the entire parking lot is ready for a new surface coat. Candidly, this is a poor money-management decision, as pavement damage simply accelerates during the winter months. Modern cut and patch paving methods are a very economical way to prolong the life of a parking area while heading off the major cost of repaving. Best yet, once sealcoated, the patched areas are virtually invisible.

A Stitch in Time

Crack sealing, as well as cut and patch paving, are highly cost effective methods of protecting pavement from further winter damage. Both can be done from late fall into winter. A small investment in timely work now can return huge savings later in avoiding costly repaving work.

Your pavement contractor can be your best resource in attaining the longest life from your pavement while avoiding liability pitfalls. At U.S. Seal-Coat & U.S. Paving, we provide our customers with free pavement inspection and consultation services, and regularly provide cost effective solutions to a variety of pavement problems. Our team is available 24 hours a day at 1-800-PAVEMENT or online at www.ussealcoat.com.

Michael Musto is president at U.S. Sealcoat and U.S. Paving, Woburn, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540