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CELEBRATING 55 YEARS

Summer is best for your pavement projects: Warm weather speeds drying

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Many of us are procrastinators by nature, and in the asphalt maintenance business that is made especially evident every year by the flood of late season calls from customers seeking to schedule pavement maintenance and repairs "before winter."

Certainly there is a compelling reason for completing asphalt maintenance projects before cold weather. Any breaches in the pavement surface will allow water from snowmelt and winter storms to penetrate to the base layer, and then freeze-thaw cycles will quickly spread damage to surrounding areas of sound pavement, resulting in more costly repairs for the next year.

Perhaps overlooked by those deferring pavement maintenance to the last possible moment is the fact that there are some very good reasons to schedule pavement work for the warm months. Not insignificantly, this avoids the late season rush and ensures that the work will be completed, even if the fall weather turns inclement or winter stages an early arrival.
Summer temperatures are ideal for all types of asphalt maintenance work. Warm weather speeds drying and curing times for line striping paint and sealcoat. This means that parking areas can be returned to service quickly, with less chance of tire tracking marks. Even hot mixed asphalt cures best when the mix temperature is maintained as long as possible.

One critical element in maintaining any pavement surface is the regular sealing of cracks to prevent water from penetrating to the base soil. 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, allow it to block water seepage through cracks even under the harshest winter conditions.
The second critical element in any asphalt maintenance plan is Sealcoating on a three-year cycle. Sealcoat may either be an asphalt emulsion or a latex-based coal tar pitch emulsion fortified with additives and sand. It provides a durable barrier to both the elements and fuel/oil leaks. The primary benefit of sealcoat is that it greatly slows the whole asphalt degradation process. The natural destruction of paved surfaces begins with solar ultraviolet oxidation of the asphalt binder, leading to shrinkage and cracking. Sealcoat is an effective sunblock for your pavement.

As fall progresses, dropping leaves and foliage debris can be problematic for sealcoating and line striping in some locations. Sealcoating every three years is the best strategy for prolonging pavement life. Declining temperatures in October end the season for sealcoat application, as the product requires temperatures above the 50s to cure properly. Paving, cut and patch paving, and

crack sealing with hot-applied rubberized joint sealant can continue well into the cold months, so long as there is no snow cover.

My advice then to property owners and managers considering pavement maintenance or repair projects is to schedule the work now while the conditions are ideal. Avoid the fall rush for last minute work. For the longest possible pavement life, asphalt surfaces should be sealcoated at least every three years. Simple linear cracks should be sealed with a hot-applied rubberized joint sealant If extensively cracked or broken pavement exists, the defective area should be cut square beyond the damage, ripped out, regraded, and repaved with basecoat binder and bituminous asphalt topcoat.

Your pavement contractor can be your best resource in attaining the longest life from your pavement investment. 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.

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