

The "Hole" Truth: Protecting Your Asphalt Investment

By Jon Baggett

When was the last time you saw the dentist? If your answer to this question is along the lines of "Just a few weeks ago" or "I have regular check-ups twice a year", then chances are you have a good preventive maintenance plan in place. However, if your answer is more like "I don't really like the dentist" or "I can't remember my last visit", then corrective maintenance may be in your future. And if you don't like the dentist now, just wait until you need a cavity filled. The same analogy can be used for preserving your parking lot and other pavement areas.

By the time you notice the pot hole, it's usually too late for preventive maintenance to be effective.

Asphalt 101

In order to maximize the life and functionality of pavement surfaces, they must be protected from natural and man-made forces. Asphalt pavements are different than other surfaces such as concrete

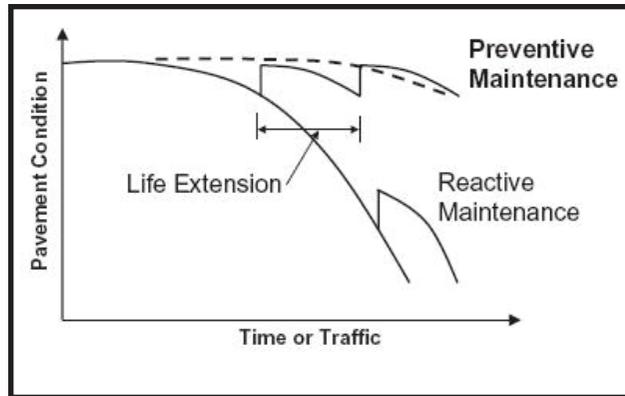
in that they contain a special binder that keeps pavements flexible so that they can absorb the constant stressors and loads of traffic that they carry. Over time, oxidation can destroy the asphalt binder. Our dry, hot weather conditions here in Arizona can accelerate this process tremendously. As asphalt binder turns hard and inflexible, it becomes more difficult for pavements to absorb the weight loads placed on it, causing raveling and surface cracks to appear. If these surface cracks open to the foundation below, water will begin to seep into and erode the grade of the pavement, causing settling and more cracks. The deterioration process of cracking and erosion can become systematic, leading to eventual pavement failure, pot holes, and severe drainage issues.

An Ounce of Prevention...

Effective preventive maintenance plans should include professionally applied seal coats and crack fills at regular intervals. The regular application of seal coats aims to protect asphalt binder from the natural oxidation process, thus delaying the onset and severity of pavement aging.

Did You Know?

In ancient Egypt, asphalt from naturally occurring deposits was used in the embalming of mummies!



Crack fill mixtures must be elastic and pliable, so when applied correctly will bond the two sides of the crack together to create a physical, highly flexible barrier between the elements and your pavement foundation. It does not take long for the Arizona elements to exploit weaknesses in your pavement, so it is a good idea to have check-ups done every year.

When preventive measures are not applied in time, or they have been applied and the pavement has reached the end of its useful life, it is time to change strategy. For dentists, this usually means drills, fillings, sometimes surgical removal, and pain and discomfort for patients. We who specialize in the pavement business also use drills (a bit larger), various asphalt fillings, full removal techniques, and occasional pain and discomfort for clients (loss of use, and sometimes upon seeing the bill). Slurry seal coating, asphalt overlay, and full and partial removal and replacement are all methods of corrective, or reactive, maintenance used in repairing pavements beyond the reaches of preventive measures. The figure to the left displays the maintenance sequence in a pavement's life

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Keeping track of the condition of your parking lot and pavement areas can be difficult and time consuming. A professional estimator can assess where your pavement is in its life cycle, determine the best maintenance options available for your needs, and help you put together a plan to ensure your investment is well protected.

In the end, the reward of having a professionally looking, safety enhanced, well-maintained parking lot will go a long way in keeping you out of a "hole" – physically and financially.

About Ace Asphalt:

- Family owned and operated since 1966.
- One of the largest parking lot construction and maintenance companies in the U.S. and the largest in Arizona.
- Paves or resurfaces over 180 million square feet per year.
- A member of the INC. 5000 fastest growing companies in U.S.
- Ranked by customers among the Top 5 Heavy Construction Companies in Arizona since 2000.
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