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UNHSC and SeaGrant Sealcoating Fact Sheet

Thomas P. Ballestero

University of New Hampshire, tom.ballestero@unh.edu

James J. Houle

University of New Hampshire, James.Houle@unh.edu

Robert M. Roseen

University of New Hampshire

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Did you know...?

- Coal tar-based sealcoat contains chemicals called PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) that may harm fish and, under some conditions, pose a risk of cancer to humans.
- Coal tar-based sealcoat is banned in several municipalities in the U.S., including Austin, Texas, and Washington, D.C. The first state-wide ban in the U.S. recently occurred in Washington state.
- Dust with elevated levels of PAHs can get tracked into your home and may end up in your carpet.
- You can tell if a product contains coal tar by looking at the materials list. Words like "coal tar," "refined coal tar," "refined tar," "refined coal-tar pitch" or similar terms should appear on the product container.
- Got any leftover sealcoat in your garage or basement? You can dispose of old containers of sealcoat at your town's annual hazardous waste disposal day.



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Thinking
about
Sealcoating
your
Driveway?

Get the
Facts!

Find more information at:

www.unh.edu/unhsc/
<http://tx.usgs.gov/coring/allthingssealcoat.html>



UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

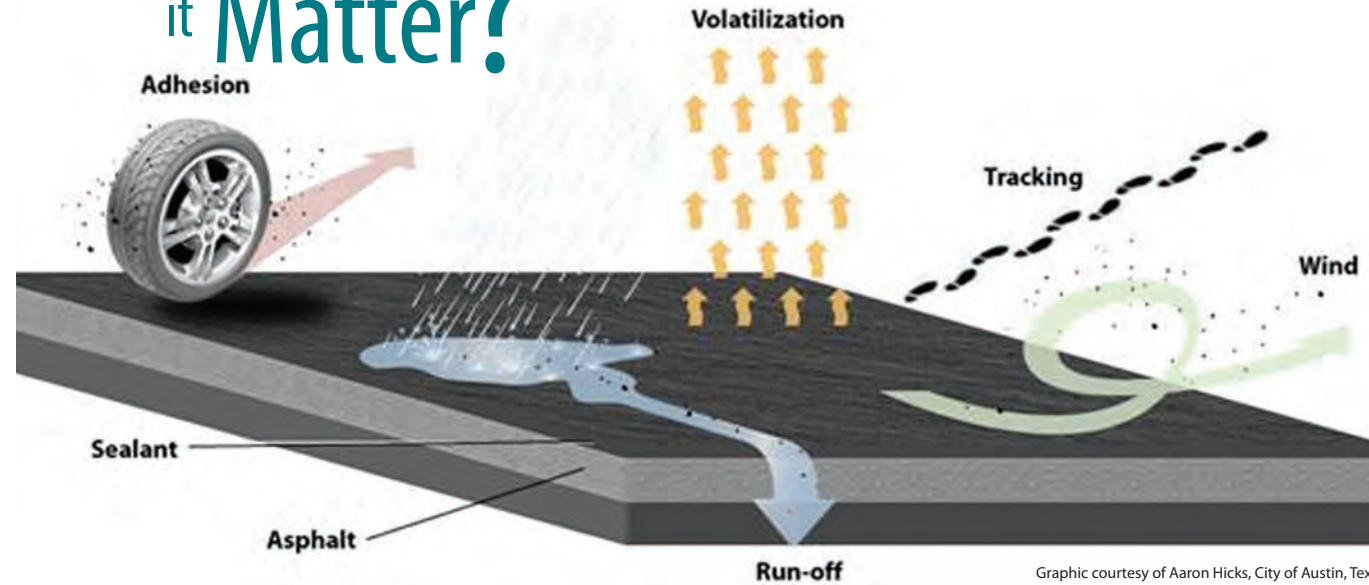
N.H. Sea Grant
Kingman Farm/UNH
Durham, NH 03824

What is Sealcoat?

Sealcoat – also called sealant – is a thin layer of black material applied to pavement surfaces. It may improve the appearance of old asphalt, but it contains chemicals that are harmful to humans and the environment.

There are two common types of sealcoat: coal tar-based and asphalt-based. Both produce a deep black finish on driveways, but coal tar-based sealcoat contains much higher levels of chemicals called PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) that harm fish and, under some conditions, pose a risk of cancer to humans.

Why does it Matter?



What can you Do?

Be informed: First ask yourself if you really need to use sealcoat. Driveways can be beautiful without the use of sealcoat. If you decide to use sealcoat, study the labels carefully and look for a product that does not have coal tar in the materials list.

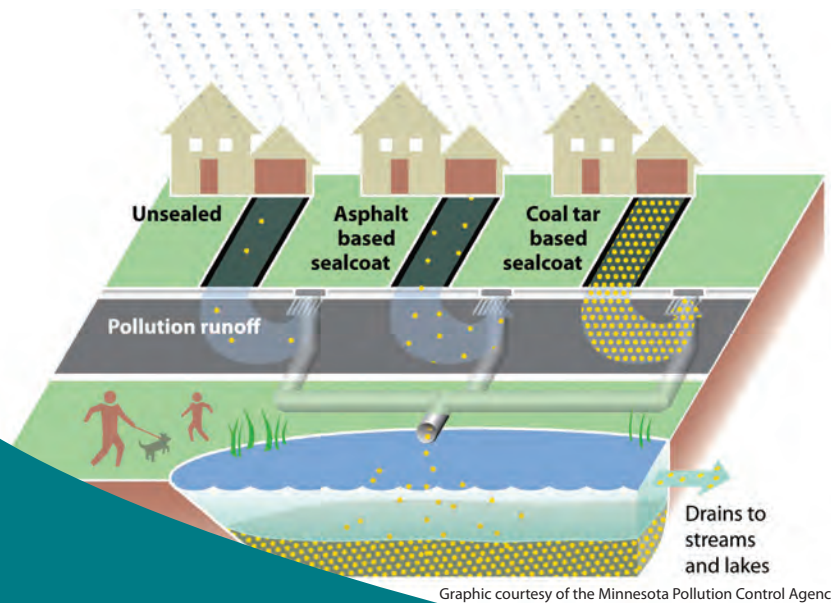
Check the weather: If the sealcoat doesn't dry thoroughly it will wear more quickly, which wastes money and releases more PAHs. The Pavement Coatings Technology Council recommends that the outside temperature be at least 60 degrees F, with no rain forecasted for at least the next 48 hours after application.

Manufacturers recommend applying sealcoat every few years to maintain an even coverage. Sealcoat wears off over time from vehicles driving on the surface, snow shoveling and plowing, wind and rain. The sealcoat ends up in lakes, streams and stormwater ponds, where PAHs may damage the health of aquatic species and could potentially enter the ecosystem.

Flakes of sealcoat may also be blown away by wind onto surrounding property and lawns. The air near sealcoated driveways contains PAHs that could be inhaled during activities on or near the driveway. Dust from sealcoated driveways can also get tracked into buildings, increasing PAH concentrations in the home.

Get the facts: A study at the University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center found that:

- **Water** running off a parking lot covered with coal tar-based sealcoat had **30 times more PAHs** than water from an unsealed parking lot.
- **Soil** near the parking lot had **highly elevated levels of PAHs**, and those levels remained high for three years after the sealcoat was applied to the lot.
- **Dust** with highly elevated levels of PAHs was **transported up to 20 yards** from the sealcoated surface by tire tracking and wind.



Ask for asphalt: If you are hiring a contractor, discuss different types of sealcoat with him or her. Most sealcoat contractors can apply either type, and some businesses have already decided to apply only asphalt-based sealcoat.