

What is the Best Time to Sealcoat?

Property managers are often insistent about having their new asphalt pavement sealcoated shortly after it's been laid. The rule of thumb has been they should wait a minimum of 30 days and preferably wait 90 days before applying sealer.

But new research by the Pavement Coating Technology Center (PCTC) suggests an even longer wait is needed. Lee Lewis, vice president of Surface Coatings Co., says new research indicates contractors should wait a year before sealcoating new asphalt pavement.

"The benefits of sealcoating are actually greater when the asphalt has had time to cure," Lewis says. He says PCTC has said contractors can seal in less time provided the pavement has been able to cure for at least 180 days when the temperature is 70 F degrees or higher. "If you wait four years to Sealcoat, the benefits are reduced, and if you sealcoat too soon it can cause more problems than it solves," Lewis says.

He says that a job paved in October, for example, and sealcoated in May or June is likely not to get the full benefit of the sealer because there are probably not enough 70 F plus days during that time period. "That's especially true in the northern areas of the country," Lewis says. "There probably haven't been enough warm days for the pavement to completely cure so there's probably still oil in the pavement. "And if there's still oil in it and you get some 90 F days during the summer, the remaining oils are going to start to warm and the oils will move to the surface, beneath the Sealcoat and will cause the coating to tear."

Lewis says jobs paved in May in most areas can likely be sealed by the end of August. "But if you pave in the summer you probably want to wait until the next summer to Sealcoat," he says.