

Parking Authority

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A proper parking lot maintenance program helps businesses meet multifaceted goals

When a company considers its customer service, sustainability and compliance programs, its parking lot should be included as a key component. A parking lot is a capital asset that requires regular maintenance for optimal appearance, performance and longevity. A customized maintenance program will provide ways for this essential space to benefit the company's bottom line.

Crack Seal and Crack Fill

Over time, cracks will form in a parking lot. Whether the cracks are transverse, longitudinal or alligator or represent fatigue failure, they should be quickly addressed to avoid further failure.

A cost-effective way to treat these problems is with crack filler (for cracks less than 2.5 millimeters or 0.1 inches) or crack sealer (for cracks greater than 2.5 millimeters or 0.1 inches). A parking lot management professional will evaluate the cracks to determine the type, density of the cracking, the job type, the immediate and future life of the lot, and product to use. All cracks should be cleaned of weeds, grass and debris prior to the application of the sealant. Once applied, crack sealed or filled areas should be inspected annually as properly addressing cracks can extend the life of the lot by five years.

Sealcoating

Factors such as weather, chemicals from vehicles and heavy equipment can negatively affect the look and color of an asphalt surface. A great way to give a lot a facelift is by applying a sealcoat. This gives it a fresh, new look and extends the life of the lot by preventing water seepage from undermining the subgrade.

Preventing water seepage and encouraging proper drainage are critical to maximizing the life of an asphalt lot. The product can be asphalt-based, can be a refined tar or could even include filler such as small chips. A site visit will help the installer understand many aspects of the lot, such as areas of erosion that will require patching or crack sealing, traffic patterns that will need to be adjusted and storm drains that should be blocked during application. Sealcoat should not be applied if rain is in the forecast within 24 hours to prevent the uncured product from washing off.

Sealing a parking lot waterproofs the surface, protects the lot from oxidation and seals small cracks. A properly sealed lot will have a longer life and provide a smooth and safe parking, driving and walking surface. Applying sealcoat every two to three years supports sustainability initiatives by avoiding costly repaving. Sealed sections extend the life of a parking lot by eight to 10 years. Seal-coating is environmentally responsible when properly applied and provides a safe and functional parking lot and increases curb appeal.

Overlay

When a lot shows severe deterioration with deep cracks and potholes, it may be time for an overlay. Overlay is a method of repaving that involves applying a layer of asphalt compacted to about 2 inches directly on top of the existing surface. Areas that have total failure to the base level supporting the pavement will require removal and patching prior to the overlay. Warm asphalt requires less heat to mix and includes recycled materials. An overlay breathes new life into a lot with extreme wear. Correcting failed surfaces with a properly installed overlay of warm asphalt is a responsible way to extend the life of a lot.

Full Replacement

Parking lot surfaces do not last forever, and there comes a time when a lot needs to be replaced. Complete replacement is recommended when a third of the lot has failed.

A full depth reclamation involves removing the asphalt and some of the base materials and pulverizing them into tiny pieces. These pieces are used as aggregate for the new lot, eliminating the need for old materials to be trucked to a landfill. This process of incorporating the existing parking lot materials into the new surface is what makes asphalt the No. 1 recycled product in America. The use of warm asphalt from a nearby plant is another way a provider can install a new lot with sustainable practices. This is also an opportunity for introducing more green space, such as adding trees for natural shading. These choices not only benefit the environment but also enhance the aesthetics of a fresh lot. An engineer will ensure the base is stable, drainage is correct and any new features are properly added before the fresh surface is paved.

Striping

The proper application of striping is essential for a safe lot. The application can include a variety of methods, from the use of global position systems to simply using stencils. The paint can be latex (most common) or thermoplastic and is applied using a compressed air striping machine. The lifespan of the paint can range from six months to three years, depending on the weather conditions, type of traffic and paint type.

No matter the method or equipment, a well-striped parking lot creates a set number of parking spaces. For sustainability purposes, reducing the size of the spaces can create more space for trees for natural shading. A parking lot management's engineering team can help create a sustainability plan.

ADA Compliance

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and its subsequent revisions ensure that all persons are provided accessible accommodations when entering, exiting and parking at facilities. Meeting both federal and state ADA requirements with regard to parking and entryways demonstrates good corporate citizenship and employee inclusion. It is also helps avoid penalties and fines. A good parking lot management provider will identify risks and gaps in a lot's compliance and recommend changes needed to bring a lot into alignment with the current federal and local standards.

As you look at the goals for this year, don't forget to consider your parking lot. Work with a parking lot management company that takes time to understand your goals, knows the applicable regulations, has access to the proper materials and uses sustainable paving practices.

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