

# A Polished Welcome

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## Methods for maintaining and protecting parking lots

Restaurant facility professionals are hired to protect company assets, all of which deteriorate over time. Parking lots are one of the most expensive assets to protect and maintain. They are designed and constructed to last up to 40 years without a replacement, but we all know this rarely happens in the real world.

Lots consistently fail before their projected 40-year lifespan. Nevertheless, they are very important because they are the first things customers and employees see when arriving at restaurants. A good-looking, well-maintained lot protects your brand, ensures safety and minimizes liabilities related to parking lot deficiencies.

This article examines the most common failures, associated repairs and preventive measures that can minimize future capital repairs, total replacements and potential lawsuits.

## Be on the Lookout

Complete an annual survey of each lot. Note the conditions and look for signs of wear and cracks, which can be easily and cost effectively repaired. The best time to survey is usually after the freezing winter months. Items to look for include:

- Potholes
- Cracks, including "alligator cracking"
- Low spots or depressions
- High spots
- Long runs of cracks, noting crack width
- Oil spots
- Changes or fading to the color of asphalt
- Ruts, especially in high-traffic areas, e.g., in front of dumpster
- Curb damage

## Prioritizing Repairs

Once the surveys are completed, set priorities based on the type, timing and estimated costs of repairs. Obviously the most important items to consider are customer/employee safety issues, ADA issues (including striping and slopes), potential car damage areas and shifting surfaces. These items may represent a major problem and must be addressed quickly to minimize future liabilities.

Prioritize each potential repair by cost. Some repairs are more severe but may be located in low-traffic areas. High-traffic areas should always take priority because of the higher potential for parking lot damage and vehicle and individual liabilities.

Next, determine what caused the damage. Several factors to consider include poor initial construction, water intrusion from lack of maintenance or irrigation issues, and inadequate draining and shifting soil. Finally, budget for each repair and schedule the project. If you have several restaurants that need the same type of repairs, group the projects together when bidding to receive a volume discount from the contractors.

### Scope of Common Projects

In general, the scope of repairs follows the outline below:

- **Cracks:** Yearly cleaning and crack sealing are sufficient for cracks less than 3 inches. For larger cracks, you will require a crack pouring using a mastic repair. The main purpose of sealing the crack is to prevent moisture from entering the subgrade material under the lot surface, which can cause long-term damage and require extensive and expensive repairs.
- **Potholes:** Normally there are two ways to repair a pothole. If it is relatively small and the base material is still in good condition, a simple patch can be done by cutting out and removing the cracked material, squaring the hole edges vertically, and placing and compacting the mix. For larger potholes with subbase issues, an overlay patch is required. In this case, the area is generally too large to be repaired by hand and hot-plant mix is needed. Again, clear out all loose and broken asphalt and rock, square off the edges, supply new subbase material and compact accordingly, then apply the hot mix.
- **Ruts (high or low spots):** These usually occur in high-traffic areas, specifically, in front of the trash container. Repairing ruts take expertise so the problem does not resurface. All loose and broken material, along with any damaged or loose base, needs to be removed. You'll need to add new base material, which will have to be properly compacted, as well as new asphalt of at least 5 inches in depth. For areas in front of the dumpster, use concrete as it will last substantially longer and is worth the additional up-charge versus asphalt.
- **Pavement discolorations:** Discolorations are usually caused by standing water, which is a sign of drainage or slope issues. Drainage problems are one of the major causes of lot failures. Unfortunately the area will need to be torn up, so the subbase can be reworked and asphalt can be reapplied to provide the proper slope and flow of moisture. Simple oil spots can be cleaned with power washing.

### Preventive Maintenance Tip

Staying on top of preventive maintenance for your lots is key in keeping them safe and in good condition. The following are general timelines for various types of preventive maintenance, but the timing will vary due to climate, traffic and current lot condition:

- Sealcoating: This needs to be completed every three to five years to slow the aging process and keep moisture away from base material.
- Crack repair: Yearly cleaning and sealing is recommended.
- Striping: Stripe every three to four years depending on climate, traffic and wear. Be sure to account for any new ADA rules.
- Slurry sealcoating: Complete every 10 years to protect lot from UV damage and provide a new wearing surface for traffic.
- Overlay: A complete lot overlay should be done approximately every 20 years.

Parking lots represent a major capital investment that can be protected with timely preventive procedures. This is not an item to ignore; the consequences can be extremely expensive to remedy. Partnering with a qualified RFMA paving company will ensure your lots are well maintained. Take advantage of their knowledge.

Remember, I'm always looking for feedback. Feel free to contact me at (972) 805-0905, ext. 3, or email at [jeff@rfmaonline.com](mailto:jeff@rfmaonline.com).

Dover and out.

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