



## Facilitator — December/January 2011



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### Safe From Harm Taking Steps to Winterize Your Parking Lot

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Winter ushers in the holidays, family and delicious meals. Many people even combine all three by gathering at their favorite restaurant. To be chosen as the gathering place for such important celebrations, your food and facilities must maintain a five-star rating.

For example, if your restaurant is located in a cold-winter climate, your heating systems might need extra service and attention. A less obvious area of concern, however, is your parking lot. Even though it might be covered in snow, the condition of the pavement should not be overlooked. Regardless of your restaurant locations, asphalt and concrete repairs should be addressed throughout the winter months to prevent the spread of problems and to mitigate potential liabilities. After all, just one slip-and-fall injury could result in costly litigation, increased insurance premiums and, worst of all, a tarnished image.

The following procedures should be performed on your parking lot this winter. Understanding your options will help you make better decisions concerning the maintenance of your restaurant parking lots during cold-weather months and help you budget for long-term repairs in the spring.

#### Patching Options

Depending on their size, severity and geographic location, potholes can be patched or the area may need to be removed and replaced. If your parking lot is located in a mild-winter climate and hot-mix asphalt is readily available, removal and replacement is the best, most long-term solution and can be completed right away.

However, if your parking lot is located in an extreme-winter climate or HMA is unavailable, treatment with cold patch can be completed as a temporary repair. Cold patch is a pliable material that can be placed loosely in a pothole, regardless of ambient temperature, and then compacted by vibratory plates. Before application, the area must be debris-free and free of water. Once applied, cold patch material has enough density to remain in the pothole, but it is not recommended as a long-term solution because it does not address the root problem. In the spring, all areas that have been patched in the winter should be thoroughly inspected by a reputable parking lot maintenance specialist to uncover the true source of the pavement defect in order to determine the correct repair.

#### Infrared Technology

Another treatment for asphalt defects during the winter involves infrared technology. This solution uses hot-mix asphalt instead of cold patch. Damaged asphalt is heated to 325 degrees for five to 10 minutes, raked to remove failed aggregate and sprayed with a rejuvenator to replenish oils lost due to oxidation. Once the material has been placed, it is compacted by vibratory plates.

This option helps prevent defects from spreading or worsening throughout the long winter months. Infrared repair is considered a thin surface patch; therefore, it is advised to reevaluate the area in spring to determine whether a more permanent repair, such as removal and replacement, is necessary.

Consider infrared technology for critical repairs, including:

- Locations where asphalt meets concrete. (These areas settle or move at different rates and may become uneven, causing trip hazards.)
- Potholes, especially in high-traffic areas.

- Areas around catch basins. (The pavement can heave and become uneven due to temperature fluctuations and freeze-thaw cycles.)
- Bumpy or rough surfaces in drive lanes or parking stalls.

### Crack Sealing

Cool temperatures cause pavement to contract, which widens cracks. The best time to seal is when cracks measure 1/4- to 1-inch wide. Sealing cracks prevents excess moisture from seeping into the pavement and softening or weakening the sub-base.

If left untreated, water that is trapped beneath the surface can widen cracks and cause pavement heaving. This is especially common in sidewalks. If you notice trip hazards on walkways and your restaurant is located in a harsh winter climate, erect signage or barricades around affected areas so customers know to exercise caution.

Plan to evaluate the area in the spring to determine the best repair. However, if your facility is located in a mild climate, avoid the potential risk and seal all cracks in sidewalks and other high-traffic areas immediately.

### Seal Coating

Typically a spring or fall procedure, seal coating can be performed during winter if the climate permits. The air and pavement temperature should be at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit during sealer application and for eight hours afterward.

Seal coating helps prevent pavement oxidation (which causes fading of the surface), and it helps minimize the rate at which water enters the pavement. Without it, water will permeate more freely, resulting in freeze/thaw expansion and contraction. An additional, seasonal benefit is that seal coating yields a smooth and even pavement texture, which makes snow removal easier and sweeping more effective.

### Snow Removal

If your site experiences snowfall, be sure you have a plan in place to remove it. The goal is to maximize operation while protecting against hazardous conditions. Based on your unique needs, such as site location, climate and budget, your restaurant parking lot can be plowed per snowfall occurrence or seasonally (based on an average yearly snowfall depth, pre-determined for that region).

In climates where snowfall is not as prevalent, it may be necessary to negotiate a contract with your service provider for ice events only. The following are just a few important tips for an effective snow removal plan. Apply de-icer before predicted snowfall occurrences at entrances, exits, drive lanes and aisles. Apply ice-melting compounds such as potassium chloride, calcium chloride or rock salt early and often during snow and ice storms. (Grit and sand also may be used to increase traction and reduce the amount of de-icing chemical required). Remove snow early if a large amount is predicted. When it is allowed to accumulate, snow becomes heavier and more time-consuming to plow. Request that your service provider plow your lot vertically with a rubber-edged plow blade. This practice helps reduce the overall time it takes to plow and minimizes damage to the surface, bumper blocks and other structures. Snow should be moved away from the restaurant toward the site perimeter or, ideally, placed in a parking stall that is directly adjacent to a drainage inlet.

### Wintertime Budgeting Tips

No matter where your restaurants are located, the winter months are the perfect time to begin budgeting for long-term repairs on your parking lot. If you haven't already, make time to walk your parking lot and assess the damage caused after a long summer of damaging UV rays and heavy rain. Common problem areas include pavement cracking, heaving or rutting; potholes; faded line striping or other markings; and oxidized pavement. All of these, if left untreated, can lead to extensive—and costly— damage and threaten the safety of customers and employees.

To ensure an accurate pavement evaluation, enlist the help of a reputable parking lot maintenance contractor. He or she can identify and prioritize repairs so your budget dollars are spent at the right time and in the most effective manner. Also, a knowledgeable contractor can consult on various maintenance options so you can choose the repair that best fits your circumstance and funding.

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