

Special Alert for 2009 -- Asphalt Sealcoating and Asphalt Paving!

For ALL Commercial and Residential Asphalt Sealcoating & Asphalt Paving!

There is a big problem for 2009 for both commercial and residential customers looking for sealcoating of asphalt pavements.

Of course sealcoating asphalt pavement is a very beneficial procedure, which should be performed within the first year of a new asphalt pavement's life in order to be of greatest benefit and should be repeated every three to five years as needed, throughout the life of the pavement. Following a regular sealcoating regiment will help your asphalt pavement to last up to twice as long as pavement, which is not properly sealed.

Of course, we have had our "Consumer Beware" page each year for nine years now; and that has saved countless thousands of people from being ripped off by the ever present "Travelers" and scam artists and of the sealcoating and pavement maintenance industry. These scams have always carried over in the asphalt paving as well. You don't see as many of them with concrete, but whether it be asphalt paving or especially sealcoating. They have always been present and a blight on our industry.

2008 brought a unique situation, though and it continues into 2009. Of course, you know the prices for oil and how they skyrocketed in 2008. It seemed like every night you turn on the news and the price of oil had gone up again. Even if you didn't do that you would notice that oil went up every time you went to the gas station to fill your car. And of course groceries and all the other costs of living have continued to increase and economists call this everything from a recession to the beginnings of a depression depending on what "expert" you are listening to. While gasoline prices are down for now, the same is not true of asphalt & sealcoating-related products. So the price of asphalt paving (which is made from crude oil) and sealcoating (again very crude oil dependent) rocketed much higher in 2008. However these prices are not coming down.

The reason is the refining of "low sulfur diesel fuel" which became law in Jan. 2008 Asphalt has always been made from the "leftovers" after all the expensive products like gasoline, other fuels, motor oil etc. were removed. When refineries developed the methods for making the new low sulfur diesel fuel they had the side-effect (good for them but not for asphalt) of virtually eliminating the "leftovers". It is predicted that gradually the price of raw asphalt oil (which effects all related products from paving "mix" to sealers) will equal the price per gallon of diesel fuel. An approx. 10X increase over 3 years ago.

Yet we have seen a tremendous increase in the number of people entering the asphalt paving and sealcoating business calling themselves "contractors" and giving customers bids for work at prices so low that they would not even cover of the materials cost of the job done properly.

We have likewise seen a tremendous rise in the number of bids for both commercial and residential projects which are very simply "too good to be true".

The reason we decided to write this article was a post on our discussion forums lately from a consumer who had received quotes for sealcoating their multiple shopping centers. With over a 20¢ difference per square foot between the low and the high bids. The low bid was so low that if you know the cost of sealcoating materials today you would know that you could not even buy the materials to do an inferior, one coat, sealcoating job at that price.

That would not include the costs for labor, fuel, preparation of the pavement, any other needed work, or profit.

So who ever furnished that bid at such an outrageously low price had to be cutting corners on the job. In order to make any money (and no one is going to work without making money). In the past we have seen some people do things as atrocious as mix-up their own sealcoating materials out of used motor oil and any other black substance that they could put on pavement and call sealcoating.

Of course, real sealcoating materials are emulsions. The word emulsion means suspended in water, thus the sealcoating materials are suspended in water, and form the actual coating on your pavement when they dry.

All sealcoating materials come from the manufacturer and a concentrated form, and most need to be diluted at a rate of about 25 gallons of water per 100 gallons of concentrated sealcoat. However, unless you were a trained inspector you would never know the difference in a product that was 100 gallons of water mixed with 100 gallons of sealcoat when it was applied to your pavement. It would still look black (even if there was some of that motor oil goop mixed up in somebody's backyard) and you might think you had a sealcoating job and got a deal. When in fact, you had been taken advantage of, and at best would have a product that would wear off very quickly and at worst, could have a product that would damage your pavement.

In this year of whether it is commercial or residential we are doing something we have never done in the past, which is mentioned prices. We have never done this because prices vary so much around the United States for the cost of materials fuel and other supplies; plus thing such as labor markets. **However this year, we are going to say that there is no possible way someone can give you a decent sealcoating job using professional materials correctly applied for less than 10-15¢ per square foot depending on your part of the country.** That would be an extremely low cost and we doubt you could find it; and we are not saying that you should be able to get the work done for 10¢ a square foot in your area or for the size of your job...Your "lowest possible price" might easily be 15-18¢ per square foot or more (and realistically that is about the "average for a "bargain" price this year from our forum observations).

In the forum post that we mentioned earlier, when the consumer finally got quotes for his shopping centers; after taking our advice on getting the work done properly; his price was in the 20¢ to 22¢ range, which is totally normal this year.

Once again, we want to emphasize that normal prices in your area may be higher or slightly lower, but in general will be somewhere between 15¢ and 25¢ per square foot for an average sealcoating job professionally applied to industry excepted specifications by a reputable company, who will offer you at least a one or two year guarantee in writing.

If anyone offers you sealcoating for less than these prices... Be very wary!

We are not saying that it could not be done. There is no way that we can know of every possibility across the nation, however, if their prices are lower than approximately 15¢ per square foot for sealcoating: Be sure to double check their references, check to make sure they have been in business in your community for a substantial amount of time (that they just didn't start a few months ago) actually talk to people who they claim to have his references to make sure those references are legitimate, if you have a Better Business Bureau make sure there are no complaints against them, and there is a new website which has been started for people to report these bogus contractors (it is new and has virtually no listings yet, but we invite you to post there and to look fair for any contractor that might be contacting you. Be very wary of contractors to contact you in a "door to door" fashion.

We do want to point out that this year has been especially hard for contractors who have only been in business a couple of years and have not built up a substantial reserve for "slow" years like this. So there might be a legitimate contractor leaving a flyer on your door were coming by in a "door to door" fashion. Just because they do that does not make them a bad contractor, however be doubly sure to check out their references and all the other things we mentioned above. To make sure they are a reputable firm; and again their prices should not be unreasonably low.

The items above in the "beware" section are not meant to indicate that a particular contractor fitting any of the individual items described is definitely not a contractor you should consider. This list is just what the name states. Warning signs or things to "beware" or be wary of. Some are almost certain problems like the "left over materials" or "today only deal". Others such as "out of state plates" or "miles away" should be viewed in context. Some contractors and cities are located adjacent to state lines (such as Kansas City being in both Kansas and Missouri) and in some less populated areas traveling 100+ miles to a job might not be uncommon. Let common sense decide; if you are in Cincinnati OH someone with Kentucky plates might be just across the river but somebody with New York plates would be a long way from home.