

Coal Tar-Based Sealants

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Guidelines for Sealing Your Driveway or Other Paved Surfaces in Lake Forest

Understanding Health Risks & Proper Sealing Procedures

If it is necessary to seal the surface of a driveway, parking lot, or playground, it is important to understand both the health risks associated with coal tar-based sealants as well as safer alternative products before the sealing process begins. Coal tar-based products are hazardous due to the high amount of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (or PAHs) that it contains. PAHs are classified as a human carcinogen and are toxic to people and wildlife.

Potential harm from coal tar-based sealant is highest during the first two weeks after application due to the prolonged evaporation of PAHs. The PAHs in coal tar can be inhaled or ingested, and are often carried indoors through shoes and pets. Children are at higher risk since they often play on or near driveways and playgrounds sealed with coal tar.



The Ecological Impacts of Coal Tar-Based Sealant

- The PAHs from coal tar products often runoff through storm water systems and ultimately reside in the sediment of rivers, streams, ponds and lakes.
- As PAHs are eroded from the surface over time, it damages ecosystems that it contacts (which includes nearby lawns, ravines, and the lakefront). They are especially toxic to fish and other aquatic life, and should be avoided where possible.



Alternatives Options for Coal Tar-Based Sealant

- If you choose to seal your driveway or other surface, use **asphalt-based sealants** as opposed to coal tar-based sealants.
- The United States Geological Survey found that asphalt-based sealants contain 1/1000th the amount of PAHs that exist in coal tar-based sealants.
- If you are not interested in using asphalt sealants as an alternative, many paving businesses offer a variety of other products (including acrylic and latex-based sealants).

What Residents Can Do

- Consider sealing your driveway less often.
- Use an asphalt-based sealant.
- Educate your neighbors about the risks associated with coal tar-based sealants.

