

Caring for New Asphalt



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You found a local contractor and checked him out with the BBB. He seemed fine, so you requested an estimate. Of course, you both spelled out exactly what was to be done, and you used your newfound paving knowledge to ensure that you were getting what you paid for.

Now the driveway has been paved, and it looks great. Here are some do's and don'ts for the new surface.

Don't place sharp or pointed objects on your driveway

Don't place sharp or pointed objects on your driveway, or indentations will result. This will certainly be true for the first year of the new driveway's life and perhaps longer. This is especially true on hot summer days when the mercury reaches 100F or above.

Stay off the new driveway 2-3 days after Installation and longer if temperatures are hot. Principal offenders are high heels, bicycle kickstands, ladders, porch chairs, etc. Give the new driveway a break. Using jack stands? Put them on a piece of plywood to spread their weight around a bit.

Don't drive near or off the edges of your new driveway

Try not to drive near (or off) the edges of your new driveway. You may fracture the asphalt and crack the whole edge. All edges should be built up with soil and sod, but still...asphalt contains no structural strength of its own. The strength lies in the stone or gravel base. If great weight is placed unevenly on the unsupported edge, it will crack.

Don't turn the car's wheels sharply on the driveway

Try not to turn the car wheels too sharply on the pavement. Also, don't turn the wheels while standing still. Better to make sure the car is in motion, or "power steering gouges" will result. These gouges are like bruises or lacerations to the surface and are caused by the kneading, grinding action of the tires moving against the asphalt.

If you didn't know already, turning your steering wheel while sitting still is awfully hard on your car's steering components.

Older asphalt mixes were coarser and therefore more stable

Today's mixes are much finer in response to an increasing public demand for a "smooth" driveway. While pleasing in appearance, the finer mixes have a greater tendency to displacement under strain. Time will eliminate this problem.

Don't park in the same place all the time

If at all possible, try not to park the car or camper in the same spot all the time. This is particularly true in the case of a dig-out where the base is fresh. No matter how thick the material, deep the base, or heavy the compaction, depressions or "wheel dishes" may result, if care is not exercised. Try to vary the parking spots a bit, even if only by a foot.

Don't allow "overweight" vehicles on the new driveway

As much as possible, don't allow overweight vehicles on your driveway. Your driveway is constructed for automobile traffic only. Heavy trucks (garbage, cement, delivery, fuel, etc.) will break up the pavement, since the base is insufficient to take the weight. Driveways can be

constructed to accommodate these larger loads. That cost is somewhat higher, and in most cases is unnecessary.

If you know that you are parking overweight vehicles on the driveway, let the contractor know right away!

Puddle-Free?

Don't feel that the driveway should be completely puddle-free. In areas completed by hand or where close drainage tolerances are encountered, puddling may sometimes occur. In addition, subtle shifting of the sub-base may cause some puddling. Any spot holding water 1/4" or less deep is almost impossible to eliminate. Many of these small water spots work themselves out with eventual use. The oils present in the new asphalt tend to hold the water on the driveway. However, as these oils gradually evaporate, the water should disappear.

Don't allow weeds or other vegetation

Don't allow weeds or other vegetation to crowd the edges of the driveway. Weeds can burrow up through the stone base and right up through the asphalt topping. You'll be able to spot them---they will show up as bumps or minor eruptions in the driveway.

Though the base is sprayed with weed-killer prior to paving, it is impossible to eliminate each and every weed seed. Air-borne particles are brought in with the stone base or dust binder when it is laid in place. The heat from the blacktop then hastens the germination process.

The strength of some of these species, such as creeping morning glory and dandelions is phenomenal. Instances of their penetrating even concrete are common. Their appearance in no way should be considered

a reflection upon the thickness or quality of the material used. Application of weed-killer or simple table salt and water should eliminate this problem.

Finally...Applying Driveway Sealer

Applying driveway sealer too soon will isn't a good idea. Wait a good 3-6 months. Only after the driveway "sets up" should sealer be applied.

Loewen Paving is one of the few family-owned paving businesses in the Fraser Valley. Loewen Paving owns its equipment and has paved driveways, roads, parking lots and more for residential, commercial, and municipal clients from Langley to Hope since 1997.