

Driveway Care Begins with Sealcoating

By Chris Linden, executive editor

Many homeowners recognize the importance of sealcoating and filling cracks in their asphalt driveway, but fewer recognize why this is an important step. Fewer still can tell you why a quality job makes all the difference.

In truth, sealcoating is far more than a cosmetic touch.

“Sealcoating is a protective layer that prolongs the life of your driveway, protects the asphalt from oil leaks and UV rays from the sun, and fills in any blemishes and inconsistencies that are natural with asphalt,” says Michael “Mikey” Pett Jr., who oversees the sealcoating division of Pett Paving, his family’s business in Richmond.

Your driveway’s first sealcoat is probably the most important coat, adds Pett. This is the pavement’s first line of defense. It should be done about six to 12 months after the driveway is installed and

must go through at least one winter. This is because asphalt takes time to cure.

Once the first layer of sealcoat is applied, plan to add a new coat every other year. Applied too frequently, sealcoat builds up, cracks and wears off, says Pett.

“We use only the highest-quality materials to ensure the customer gets the most out of their investment,” says Pett. “We know exactly what needs to be done, and we do not try to sell a customer something they don’t need. There are shady sealcoat contractors out there who will water down their material, won’t prep the job properly and won’t be around when you need help.”

Homeowners can extend the life of their driveway with a few simple measures. For starters, backfill dirt against the edge of the driveway to support the asphalt. Avoid heavy vehicles, bike kickstands, trailer hitches and other areas of



concentrated weight, as those can damage a new driveway. In addition, keep the vehicle moving while turning your wheels – especially on hot days.

Plenty of homeowners choose to sealcoat by themselves. Others hire the itinerant companies that pass through the neighborhood. This is a case where you get what you pay for, says Pett.

Reputable companies use higher-quality materials, offer free estimates, and have the expertise to recognize what will keep the driveway in good shape for years to come, says Pett. ■

Pett Paving is located at 3790 E. Solon Road, in Richmond, (815) 675-0647.

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For the Best Driveway, Hire the Right Team

By Chris Linden, executive editor

You get what you pay for. The old adage is especially meaningful when it comes to driveways and sidewalks. Shoddy work now will cost you more in the long run, says Mike Pett Sr., owner of Pett Paving in Richmond.

While his firm has spent more than a decade paving and sealcoating driveways, Pett has worked in the industry for more than 30 years and has quoted many jobs from consumers who want the best driveway but don't always know how to find it.

The trick is to start with a company that cares about its reputation.

Reputable firms start by sending an estimator like Pett Sr. Typically a week after the customer's call, he visits and takes measurements, evaluates the setting and learns about the customer's needs. His trained eye also recognizes potential needs, such as a wider driveway to prevent ruts in the yard or thicker asphalt

for heavy equipment like an RV or boat trailer. Within a few days, he'll offer a no-nonsense bid that lays out exactly what his firm is offering, what square footage they'll cover and what they'll charge. Not all firms are so straightforward.

"My price is my price," says Pett Sr. "A lot of companies will say something like 'I'm putting in this much gravel,' but then they come back later and say, 'We need to put in extra gravel and it's going to cost you extra.' The only reason my price would change is because the scope of work has changed."

Once the bid is in hand, try to compare apples-to-apples against other bids. First, look at the amount of gravel being used and the thickness of the compressed asphalt, Pett Sr. says. Then, learn about the company's reputation. Find out if they have a central office you can visit should a problem arise. Ask if



the company is licensed and insured, and ask for references to satisfied customers. Reputable companies are eager to share.

Pett Sr. prides himself on a no-hassle bidding process. Where some companies apply pressure, Pett Sr. believes a quality bid speaks for itself.

"Right now, we're averaging about seven to nine days for an estimate," he says. "It's worth the wait, because we have fair pricing and quality work. And we'll always communicate." ■

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