

# Moving to safer alternatives to coal tar sealcoats

## Statewide ban now in effect in Minnesota

Effective January 1, 2014, the sales and use of coal tar-based sealcoats are banned in Minnesota. See [Minnesota Statutes section 116.202](#). The ban will minimize the unnecessary release of harmful and persistent chemicals into your and your neighbors' environment.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is working with partners to implement the ban. Go to [MPCA's Restriction on Coal Tar-Based Sealants](#) web page for details as they develop.



Pouring seal coating on a driveway.

This Moving to Safer Alternatives web page now provides resources to assist pavement owners and sealcoat providers in using safer alternatives effectively.

MPCA staff have worked with independent asphalt paving and maintenance experts to develop guidance on pavement preservation choices and, if sealcoat is the best option, its successful use. That guidance is available at:

- [Choosing alternatives to coal tar-based pavement sealcoats](#)

MPCA is also maintaining a map and list of contractors and suppliers who pledged not to use coal tar-based sealcoats: in years prior to the coal tar ban. The safer alternatives require careful application, so the experience of these early-adopting contractors and suppliers could help produce better results for pavement owners. However, the final decision on choice of safer alternative and provider rests with the owner, so be sure to ask the questions suggested in the [Choosing alternatives to coal tar-based pavement sealcoats](#) guidance and research thoroughly before making your decisions. The pledged providers are available through:

- [Interactive map and list](#)

MPCA is now engaged in a project funded by U.S. EPA's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative through 2014 to promote reductions of coal tar sealcoat and the resulting PAH releases across states and provinces in the Great Lakes basin.

- [Great Lakes Coal Tar Sealant PAH Reduction Project](#)

The MPCA recognizes there are other sources of PAHs in the environment, and works on them where feasible ([residential wood-burning](#), for instance).

## Concerns about coal tar

Among the chemicals in coal tar-based sealcoat, coal tar pitch is known to cause cancer in humans and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are probable human carcinogens. PAHs also harm the aquatic food chain. Studies around the U.S. have shown that PAHs are released from coal tar-based sealcoats into the air and homes, workplaces, and shopping centers, and also into ponds, lakes and streams. In addition to the potential health risk of PAHs, there can be substantial costs for cities and private property owners to manage sediment in stormwater ponds that is contaminated with PAHs from coal tar-based sealants.