



HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

RESURFACING OR REPLACING YOUR ASPHALT DRIVEWAY

For contracted repairs

Many people install a new asphalt drive over an existing driveway of some type. This is commonly called “resurfacing” – and is different from “sealing” the drive. Resurfacing is not usually as long-lasting as removing the old drive and installing new asphalt; however, since total replacement costs about a third more than resurfacing, many people will explore the resurfacing option for financial reasons. As in any repair, the amount of time and effort spent in preparation will determine how well the finished driveway looks and how long it will last.

In exploring your options for an asphalt drive, the following things should be considered:

TEAR-OUT / NEW DRIVE

The best method is to install the asphalt by itself and not over an old drive. In a complete tear-out, the contractor completely removes the old drive, and lays down a 4” layer of compacted gravel for drainage (*note: all code requirements are based on Building Code in Cleveland Heights*). This is followed by a course of compacted asphalt as a base (a #301 binder course, 2” thick, is the minimum required by code, but 4” is better). Finally, a surface layer of 2”-thick compacted asphalt (#404 surface course) is installed. This type of installation will provide the longest lasting job. If you are considering total replacement, you might also price concrete, and compare the costs – and the advantages and disadvantages – of each.

ASPHALT RESURFACE (OVER ASPHALT)

A #404 surface course of asphalt can be installed on top of existing asphalt. Since the product used for both layers is the same, the layers should heave together in the winter. However, before choosing this option, you should consider why your present drive is failing. For example, is the base underneath the asphalt not giving it the proper support? Putting new asphalt on top of existing problems won't make them go away. The time to correct them is *before* you install the new asphalt.

ASPHALT OVER CONCRETE

Asphalt can be installed on top of concrete; however, you will be taking a risk that the concrete underneath will, after a period of years, heave and move under the asphalt, cracking or breaking the surface. Nevertheless, it is possible that your drive may last for a long time without this happening.

There are some things to look at in your existing concrete that can help you decide whether or not to try installing asphalt over concrete. Are the driveway blocks level? Are the joints or cracks pretty close, or are there large gaps

between the pieces? Is one side raised up where it shouldn't be? Evaluate these problem areas in your drive. The more prominent they are, the more likely you are to have problems later on.

APPROVAL REQUIRED

In many communities (including Cleveland Heights), *this type of installation requires prior approval by the Building Department*. Consideration is given on a case-by-case basis, depending on the condition of the underlying concrete.

SPECIFICATIONS

Regardless of how you have the asphalt installed, there are a few things to watch for. Make sure that the new asphalt will slope away from the house and carry the rain water to the street or to a catch basin in the drive – not onto a neighbor's property or into the garage; that the asphalt won't be installed any higher than the bottom of any basement window frame; that the edges will be firmly supported and tamped. These are all good specifications to get included in your contract.

BEFORE YOU PAY

Check out a potential contractor's past work by looking at a drive they did two or three years ago to see how well it has held up. Don't make final payment until you are sure the city has inspected and passed the job, and until you have checked the drainage (use a garden hose and water) and are fully satisfied.

AFTER INSTALLATION

You'll need to stay off your new drive for several days and be careful about tracking tar into the house. An asphalt drive will be "soft" the first year after installation – especially on hot summer days. Sharp things like bicycle kickstands tend to make holes.

SEALING AND MAINTENANCE

Annual sealing of the drive, following the instructions given by the contractor and the manufacturer of the sealing compound, is the best way to give your new drive a long, happy life. (*See separate handout on "Asphalt Driveway Repair" for instructions on how to seal your drive.*)



Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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