
BEST PRACTICES FOR SEALCOATING

Spray vs. Squeegee What is the Best Way to Apply Pavement Sealer?

Is it Squeegee? Is it Spray? Or a Combination of Both?



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The pavement sealcoating industry originally started with a squeegee application being the only approach to applying pavement sealer. In the early days, contractors who sprayed sealer were viewed by the mainstream with suspicion. Typically, spraying sealer involved cutting back asphalt with kerosene and spraying down a thin coat with a make-shift water spray pump. Since then great strides have been made in the engineering of sophisticated sand spray systems capable of spraying water-based pavement sealers with heavy sand loadings. The advent of new spray equipment brought about industry wide acceptance of applying sealer by spray.

Today, millions of gallons of pavement sealer are applied by spray as well as squeegee - with quality results for both methods of application.



Squeegee Application



Spray Application

To fully understand the difference between spray and squeegee application we need to take a close look at what happens when sealer comes into contact with the pavement after each application method.

Figure 1 shows an illustration of a pavement profile side view of what sealer looks like on pavement when it is sprayed. As the illustration shows, when sealer is sprayed it forms an even thickness over the tops of the pavement surface aggregate and into and along the bottom of the pores of the pavement. Consequently, spraying allows for more control of the coverage rate regardless of the porosity of the pavement. Since car tires only come into contact with the tops of the rocks, many feel that a two coat spray application provides adequate protection in the pores of the pavement, with additional build-up on the tops of the rocks for long-term color retention.



Figure 1

Figure 2 shows an illustration of a pavement profile side view of what sealer looks like on pavement when it is squeegeed. As the illustration shows, when sealer is squeegeed the pores of the pavement are completely filled with a thin layer deposited on the tops of the rocks. Squeegee application helps to better lock in the surface fines and waterproof the pores of the asphalt pavement. Typically, more sealer is applied per square yard when squeegeeing versus spraying (unless the pavement is extremely smooth). Also, there is more of a mechanical force that breaks the surface tension of the aggregate during application. The mechanical force of the squeegee helps to create a better bond of the sealer to aggregate. However, with squeegee application there is typically less sealer on the tops of the pavement surface aggregate versus spray application.



Figure 2

Consequently, many quality minded contractors have begun to squeegee the first coat and spray the second coat. The first squeegee coat fills and waterproofs the pores of the asphalt and creates a mechanical bond with the surface of the pavement. The second spray coat deposits additional material to the tops of the pavement surface aggregate while providing an attractive consistent spray finish look to the pavement.

Some say the best performing sealcoat jobs are two squeegee coats followed by a spray finish coat. Others say one squeegee coat followed by two spray coats. Contractors should try both methods and decide for themselves.

