

How to Make Sure Your Parking Lot is Ready to Become a COVID-19 Testing Spot

By Bob Lester

With parking lots across the U.S. being transitioned into COVID-19 testing grounds, it can feel stressful for facility owners and operators to know whether their lots are ready for a transition.

After fluctuating winter temperatures and precipitation left parking lots with cracks and potholes, many businesses are being forced to figure out how to fix these issues quickly so the lots can be transitioned into coronavirus testing sites.

Knowing the urgent need and operators' desire to help their communities through the pandemic in any way they can, operators are being challenged to venture into the unfamiliar territory of quickly preparing lots to become safe medical testing sites.

By proactively taking steps toward testing preparedness, operators and building managers may be able to avoid the cost – both in time and money – of pulling in external construction professionals, allowing for a seamless and rapid transition.

AUDIT LOTS FOR COMMON ISSUES

Quickly auditing your parking lot for damage will allow your facilities team to easily gauge the readiness of your lot for transition. Looking for items like potholes, cracks, and rutting – which is when the pavement shows grooves from wear and tear – should be high priority during the audit process. You should walk away with two pieces of

information: the quantitative level of damage and the severity of damage.

To understand the quantitative level of damage, your team should calculate the number of potholes that need to be filled, the number of cracks that need to be sealed, and the number of spots showing signs of rutting. Having numbers ready will allow for a paving company to quickly provide a personalized, realistic estimate for repairs.

Another important factor to account for is the severity of the damage. For example, a pothole that is several feet wide is generally more concerning than several small potholes and may cause structural damage to your lot that would require a complete repave. By taking note of the severity of each pothole, contractors can provide a realistic recommendation

on the types of repairs that will be necessary, as well as how long repairs will take.

UNDERSTAND THE OPTIONS FOR QUICK, COST-EFFECTIVE MAINTENANCE

More often than not, operators will not have to invest in a total repave. Knowing that a complete overhaul of the existing lot will not only require a larger budget, they also take longer, and are not ideal for operators trying to quickly get their lots up to par for a quick transition to a COVID-19 testing site.

That said, ensuring that the lot is structurally sound should also be a priority for





operators. To find a balance of efficiency and safety, operators should understand each repair option in order of severity:

- **Crack Sealing:** The least extensive repair, which involves filling small cracks (less than ¼ inch wide) with a liquid filler.
- **Seal Coating:** If several cracks have already been filled, seal coating protects the vulnerable points in your lot from the elements. This process is ideally done every 2-4 years after initial crack sealing.
- **Resurfacing:** This involves adding a new layer of asphalt on top of the existing lot's surface. Ideally, it can add about 10 years to the lifespan of the lot and is more affordable than a total replacement.
- **Mill and Resurface:** Removing the first layer of asphalt and replacing the surface directly underneath it, which can be a costly repair, but it will extensively prolong the life of your lot.
- **Full Lot Replacement:** Lots typically only need to be completely replaced when 25 percent or more of the surface is damaged. Since this is the most extensive measure, it is generally only utilized when there are structural issues below the surface level of the lot.

COMPLETE ONGOING LOT MAINTENANCE

Do a quick audit of your lot each quarter. Assessing the space for damage every three months allows for you to catch potholes and cracks early, which

means repairs are quicker and cheaper.

If you're making sure your lot is up to par on an ongoing basis, you're more likely to be prepared for a crisis situation like COVID-19. Being aware of any new cracks, holes, or corrosion is the first step in keeping the property safe. Potholes can deteriorate quickly once they've sprung up, so it's important to keep a watchful eye.

Even if you're not turning your lot into a testing site or a food distribution location, your facility's lot is likely unoccupied currently with stay at home orders in effect. That means it is a good time to think about cost-effective ways to rehab it after a damaging winter season. Either way, it does not seem likely that COVID-19 will be out of the picture any time soon. As the situation continues to evolve, the last thing business owners and parking lot managers want to deal with is damage to a patron's vehicle or an injury that could have been avoided.

Understanding how to quickly and efficiently make sure your lot is ready for any sort of quick business pivot is key to ensuring the safety of patrons, employees, and your community. 💰

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