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## Congressional briefing: Parking lot sealants and their impacts on urban streams, aquatic life

For immediate release  
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On Friday, Dec. 2, the Water Environment Federation (WEF), representing more than 38,000 water quality professionals in more than 80 countries, and the U.S. Geological Survey are co-sponsoring a Congressional briefing regarding the impacts of coal tar-containing pavement sealants on urban streams and aquatic life.

USGS and City of Austin staff scientists will present findings from research on the issue conducted in the Austin area.

Pavement sealants are surface finishes for parking lots, driveways and airport runways that can provide an attractive and protective barrier coat from weather and chemicals.

On Nov. 18, 2005, the City of Austin became the first city in the United States to ban the use of coal tar-containing pavement sealants because they are a potent source of PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), an organic contaminant known to be carcinogenic and toxic to aquatic life.

Research conducted by the City of Austin and the USGS indicates PAH-containing particles are washing off sealed parking lots and into area creeks.

Work conducted by the USGS indicates that parking lot sealants may represent a major portion of PAHs in streams studied. City research indicates the coal tar-sealants are toxic to aquatic life and degrade stream communities.

Now that the ban has been approved, the City will be providing information on enforcement and product disposal as it becomes available.

The history of the PAH issue, supporting research and alternative products are currently listed on the City's Web site at [www.cityofaustin.org/watershed/coal\\_tar\\_main.htm](http://www.cityofaustin.org/watershed/coal_tar_main.htm).

Those wishing to purchase a pavement sealant from a retailer or hire a sealant applicator are advised to request a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) to verify the product does not contain coal tar.

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