

Washington DC Bans Coal Tar In Pavement Sealants

On July 1, 2009 the District banned the use and sale of coal tar products used in many pavement sealants. The ban is part of the Comprehensive Stormwater Management Enhancement Amendment Act of 2008, which Mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D) signed into law in January.

Dust from coal tar products contains toxic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. Rain washes PAHs off pavements into rivers and streams.

The ban will reduce the amount of toxic chemicals that run off into streams and threaten the Anacostia and Potomac rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Research suggests that total PAH loads washed off parking lots could be reduced by as much as 90 percent if parking lots were unsealed.

"It's rare that we have a chance to knock out this kind of pollution in one fell swoop," said George S. Hawkins, the director of the D.C. Department of the Environment. "Our nation has made substantial progress, but now that we've discovered what's in coal tar and what it does, we have a rare opportunity to protect our waterways relatively easily."

Coal tar alternatives for paving are readily available, the department said. Property owners and contractors should avoid using products with coal, tar, refined coal tar pitch or RT-12 listed as ingredients on the product container or on the material safety data sheet that should be available through distributors.

The penalty for using or selling coal tar products is a fine of up to \$2,500 per day