



BEAR CREEK WATERSHED

Fact Sheet 50 Coal-Tar Alternatives

June 8, 2015

The Bear Creek Watershed Association protects and restores water and environmental quality within the Bear Creek Watershed from the effects of land use.

Clear Creek County
Jefferson County
City of Lakewood
Town of Morrison
Aspen Park Metropolitan District
Brook Forest Inn
Conifer Sanitation Association
Conifer Metropolitan District
Denver Water Department
Evergreen Metropolitan District
Forrest Hills Metropolitan District
Genesee Sanitation & Water District
Geneva Glen
Jefferson County School District
Kittredge Water & Sanitation District
Tiny Town Foundation, Inc.
West Jefferson County Metropolitan District
Evergreen Trout Unlimited
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Since preventing pollution is much easier than cleaning up after the fact, the BCWA recommends the discontinued or limited use of coal-tar based sealants in the watershed. Any person, homeowner, business or agency considering a surface sealant for short-term pavement maintenance within the Bear Creek Watershed is urged you to use alternatives to coal tar-based sealcoats, which are safer for human health, stream water quality and the environment. The BCWA wants you to help protect our environment.

The Association provides more information about the water quality and environmental concern associated with the use of coal-tar sealants in the *BCWA PGO20 - Alternatives to Coal Tar-based Pavement Sealcoats: Guidance for Agencies, Property Owners, Associations and Managers in Bear Creek Watershed.*

This fact sheet identifies some safer alternatives.

Do not select products if their safety data sheets, container labels, or technical bulletins show the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) numbers 65996-93-2, 65996-89-6, or 8007-45-2, or the words “coal tar,” “refined coal tar,” “refined tar,” “refined coal tar pitch,” “coal tar pitch volatiles,” “RT-12,” “tar” or similar terms. You may see coal tar/asphalt blends offered with as low as 10% coal tar content, but even at that level, PAH content is around 100 times higher than asphalt-based sealcoat. These blends should be avoided.

The most common and cheapest alternative to coal tar now on the market is petroleum asphalt-based sealcoat (CAS number 8052-42-4). Asphalt sealcoats contain PAHs, but at as little as 1/1000th the PAH level of coal tar sealcoats. Good asphalt sealcoat emulsions are very affordable, will provide a black appearance for 1-2 years, and can provide less-visible protection for 2-4 years if properly applied. They are permitted in locations with bans on coal tar.

Asphalt sealcoat data sheets may give ranges such as 10-30% for asphalt content, but ask for 30%. Polymer content of 2.5% to 5% aids drying, adds flexibility, and helps retain aggregate (chip or gravel) if you are applying a chip seal.

Other alternatives such as Gilsonite®, acrylic and agricultural oil-based seals contain few or no PAHs, but they tend to be higher-priced and they have less of a performance track record than asphalt seals. Even so, you should ask about these products and their effectiveness and cost as research and market conditions evolve.

When sealing a driveway, roadway or parking lot, please take the following precautions to help protect our local streams and lakes:

- Before using a pavement sealant, make sure that it does not contain coal tar, coal tar pitch, or RT-12.
- Choose a product that is asphalt - or latex-based. Many major chains such as Home Depot, Lowe’s, and Ace Hardware, no longer sell coal tar sealants and only sell alternative products.
- For those hiring a contractor to do the job, specify that you want them to use a product without coal tar, and ask to see the label before they use it.