



Fact Sheet • June 2020

Surface dressing

Surface dressing operations are carried out between April and September each year, this is because we need warm dry weather to make sure the dressing becomes established.

What is surface dressing?

Surface dressing is a preventative treatment. It is a commonly used way to extend the life of a road, and is an essential part of Cornwall Council's Highway Service, alongside patching and resurfacing.

Roads are selected for surface dressing based on:

- Regular highways inspections and surveys
- Reports from councillors, town and parish councils and community groups
- Reports from residents – you can report a defect online

Why we do it

Surface dressing seals the road and prevents water entering the structure of the road. This can lead to long-term damage - especially as a result of freezing and thawing during the winter.

We also use surface dressing to increase the skid resistance of roads which are otherwise structurally sound. This may not always be obvious to road users - the road might look ok, but in fact it requires further treatment.

Surface dressing offers many other advantages:

- It helps to reduce spray caused by vehicles travelling on wet roads.
- Compared to resurfacing, surface dressing provides a very low carbon footprint solution, for example, it minimises the amount of aggregate we use.
- It maximises the cost-effectiveness of highway maintenance funds - depending on traffic volumes surface dressing can extend the life of the road by up to ten years.

When we do it

We can only do work in the daytime as the process relies on the evaporation of water from the binder (glue) for it to set. We cannot work in wet weather either - any amount of rain or surface water dilutes the bitumen and so does not hold the chippings in place.

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About the treatment

Any obvious defects are repaired, and the road studs are removed before the surface dressing operations start.

The road is then sprayed with bitumen binder, stone chippings are then spread onto this and pressed into the surface by a roller.

The next, and essential part of the process involves slow moving traffic embedding the chippings further.

Loose chippings

We leave loose chippings on the road to protect the surface treatment.

When the chippings have bedded in, we sweep the road two or three times to remove the excess.

Until we clear the chippings there is a 20mph speed limit on the road. This is to maintain safety for all road users, protect the new dressing and to prevent damage to your vehicle.

Please be aware that surface dressing can produce a little more tyre noise than some other road surface treatments. This noise will reduce in time as the chippings 'bed down'.

Road markings and studs

Any lines are replaced approximately seven days after the surface has been dressed - this ensures that any excess chippings have been removed and that the lining will stick to the surface. Dry weather is essential for the lining - we can't do this in wet or damp conditions. Road studs (where they exist) will then be replaced once the road markings have been laid.

How long does it take?

Surface dressing is a fast moving operation and we usually complete the work in one day, although larger sites may take up to three days.

But don't forget we go back to sweep the road and return when the chippings have bedded in to put back the road markings and any road studs.

Access during works

We often have to close roads for these operations to be carried out safely. Traffic management arrangements will be assessed and depend upon the road width and nature of the site.

Access will be maintained to properties and businesses and our staff will help you to get into, or out of the roadworks site safely using the right route.

How you can help

- Look out for signs advising that surface dressing will be happening in your area. We will always do our best to minimise disruption, but there may be some minor delays to traffic or diversions in place, which could mean you need to allow a little extra time for your journey.
- Please drive carefully over the new surface and to prevent damage to vehicles keep to the 20mph speed limit, keep your distance and do not overtake.
- Take care not to walk on the freshly laid materials. Chippings can easily be picked up on footwear, wheelchairs, pushchairs or pets' paws - it's best to keep children and pets away from the treated areas and to check your shoes before entering your property or vehicle.
- Get in touch with us if you are concerned about getting access to your home or business. You can email us at surfacing@cormacltd.co.uk

Advance warning signs

Although our programmes are published, and signs are put out in advance, work can only be carried out in dry weather. When it rains, the work has to stop so the schedule may need to change at short notice. We will always reschedule at the earliest opportunity. This is likely to be the next dry day, however if works are significantly delayed we will update signs on the site.

Please note ...

Before the start time of the works, parked vehicles should be removed from the road. Residents will be notified through the use of signing within the site or by letter.

You can report an issue on a road, highway or footway on the Cornwall Council website:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reportroad>

If there is an issue which is a threat to public safety, please telephone **0300 1234 222** (24 hour service) giving details of the location.

