



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**  
**Paula J. Hammond, P.E.**  
Secretary of Transportation

**Environmental and Engineering  
State Material Laboratory**  
PO Box 47365  
Olympia, WA 98504-7365  
360-709-5400  
Fax: 360-709-5588  
TTY: 1-800-833-6388  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov)

February 11, 2011

David Frockt, State Representative  
46<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Elimination of Coal Tar Sealers from WSDOT Specification

Dear Representative Frockt,

Thank you for your inquiry on current WSDOT policy regarding coal-tar emulsions. Our Department formerly used coal-tar based paving sealants for limited special purposes, such as rest area parking lots. However, we no longer use coal-tar based products as paving sealants. We discontinued the use of coal-tar based products because scientific studies have raised significant concerns about links between these products and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs). PAHs are toxic compounds that are known environmental hazards. This environmental concern dictated that we seek alternatives.

We now use asphalt-based products to seal asphalt pavements. These asphalt based products are comparable in performance and price, and do not pose the environmental risks that have been associated with coal-tar emulsions.

We believe the decision to discontinue coal-tar products and move to asphalt-based sealants will help to protect streams, lakes and our environment from an important source of toxic PAHs.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me at 360-709-5401.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Thomas E. Baker'.

Thomas E. Baker, PE  
State Materials Engineer

Cc: Jeff Uhlmeyer