Did you know...?

• Coal tar-based sealcoat contains chemicals called PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) that may harm fish and, under some conditions, pose a risk of cancer to humans.

• Coal tar-based sealcoat is banned in several municipalities in the U.S., including Austin, Texas, and Washington, D.C. The first statewide ban in the U.S. recently occurred in Washington state.

• Dust with elevated levels of PAHs can get tracked into your home and may end up in your carpet.

• You can tell if a product contains coal tar by looking at the materials list. Words like “coal tar,” “refined coal tar,” “refined tar,” “refined coal-tar pitch” or similar terms should appear on the product container.

• Got any leftover sealcoat in your garage or basement? You can dispose of old containers of sealcoat at your town’s annual hazardous waste disposal day.

Find more information at:

www.unh.edu/unhsc/
Sealcoat – also called sealant – is a thin layer of black material applied to pavement surfaces. It may improve the appearance of old asphalt, but it contains chemicals that are harmful to humans and the environment.

Manufacturers recommend applying sealcoat every few years to maintain an even coverage. Sealcoat wears off over time from vehicles driving on the surface, snow shoveling, plowing, wind and rain. The sealcoat ends up in lakes, streams and stormwater ponds, where PAHs may damage the health of aquatic species and could potentially enter the ecosystem.

Flakes of sealcoat may also be blown away by wind onto surrounding property and lawns. The air near sealcoated driveways contains PAHs that could be inhaled during activities on or near the driveway. Dust from sealcoated driveways can also get tracked into buildings, increasing PAH concentrations in the home.

Get the facts: A study at the University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center found that:
- Water running off a parking lot covered with coal tar-based sealcoat had 30 times more PAHs than water from an unsealed parking lot.
- Soil near the parking lot had highly elevated levels of PAHs, and those levels remained high for three years after the sealcoat was applied to the lot.
- Dust with highly elevated levels of PAHs was transported up to 20 yards from the sealcoated surface by tire tracking and wind.