

PAVEMENT DECISION GUIDE

Repair Now or Wait?

A practical pavement triage guide for deciding what needs attention now, soon, or during future planning.

Use condition, risk, and movement - not appearance alone

A gray surface is not automatically failed, and a dark coating cannot correct structural problems. Look at water entry, traffic risk, progression, and the condition below the surface.

ACT NOW

Safety hazards, open potholes, rapidly worsening failure, severe drainage issues, or damage exposing the base.

SCHEDULE SOON

Cracks admitting water, early edge failure, oxidation, worn markings, or localized damage that is still repairable.

MONITOR / PLAN

Stable cosmetic changes or minor conditions that are not growing, unsafe, or allowing meaningful water entry.

Act now

Prompt attention is warranted when safety, drainage, or rapid deterioration can increase damage or liability.

- ☐ Potholes, loose material, sharp drop-offs, or trip hazards in active areas.
- ☐ Standing water that remains after surrounding pavement dries.
- ☐ Widespread alligator cracking, pumping, soft areas, or visible base movement.
- ☐ Cracks or failed joints directing water beneath the pavement.
- ☐ Damage affecting entrances, fire lanes, accessibility routes, or normal traffic flow.
- ☐ A condition that has noticeably expanded since the last inspection.

Schedule soon

These conditions may still be manageable with maintenance or targeted repair if the supporting pavement remains sound.

- ☐ Open cracks that can accept water but have not become widespread structural failure.
- ☐ Fading from black to gray with a dry or weathered surface texture.
- ☐ Localized edge deterioration before large pieces break away.
- ☐ Oil spots or contamination that need treatment before protective work.
- ☐ Worn parking lines, arrows, fire lanes, or pedestrian markings.
- ☐ Small failed areas that can be isolated from otherwise serviceable pavement.

Monitor and plan

Document the condition, photograph it from the same angle, and set a specific review date instead of simply forgetting it.

- ☐ Very fine, stable surface cracks with no movement or water-related symptoms.
- ☐ Appearance-only concerns on pavement that remains firm and functional.
- ☐ Minor surface wear that is not shedding material or exposing the base.
- ☐ Work that can safely wait while a larger coordinated project is budgeted.
- ☐ A low-use area with no safety issue and no evidence of accelerating damage.

Five questions before you decide

1	Is it unsafe?	Consider people, vehicles, accessibility, visibility, and active traffic patterns.
2	Is water getting in?	Cracks, failed joints, low spots, and drainage paths can move water into vulnerable areas.
3	Is it changing?	Compare dated photos and measurements instead of relying on memory.
4	Is the base still sound?	Surface products cannot correct movement or failure below the pavement.
5	Will waiting cost more?	Maintenance is most useful before deterioration passes the point where that treatment fits.

A guide cannot see the whole property

Different failures can look similar in a photo. Traffic, drainage, prior repairs, pavement age, base condition, and weather all affect the right recommendation. When the decision is unclear, request an honest on-site assessment before buying a treatment.