
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

January 25, 2017

Alderman Jim Bohl
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Council legislation would ban coal tar sealants in Milwaukee

Milwaukee would join two states, the cities of Austin, San Antonio, Seattle, Minneapolis and Washington, D.C., Madison – and a growing list of other U.S. communities– if the Common Council approves a proposed city ban on coal tar sealants.

A proposed ordinance authored by **Alderman Jim Bohl** – and recommended for approval earlier today by the Public Works Committee -- would ban the use and sale of coal tar sealants typically used on driveways, parking lots and playgrounds during paving projects. Coal tar materials have been shown to contain a highly toxic additive that poses serious health and environmental dangers.

Alderman Bohl said coal tar sealants have been shown to contain heavy amounts of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons – or PAHs – a known human carcinogen. A recent *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* article revealed a study by the U.S. Geological Survey and Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) which showed coal tar sealants are the primary source of toxic chemicals found in the muck around Milwaukee area waterways

“These PAHs can be washed over time into rivers, streams, and lakes, and they can be tracked into homes and buildings on our shoes or via dust,” Alderman Bohl said. “We need to be out front on this immediate health and environmental threat, and the citywide ban is the best first step we can take.”

-More-

Coal tar sealants/ADD ONE

According to Alderman Bohl, PAHs have been shown to increase cancer rates in humans 38 times over lifetime exposure, and have been shown to cause an increased risk in skin, lung, bladder, kidney, and digestive tract cancers, along with decreased immune function, cataracts, asthma and breathing problems/lung abnormalities, skin inflammation, adverse birth outcomes for babies born to exposed mothers (lower birth rate, premature delivery and heart malformations), lower IQ rates and increased behavioral problems in children. In addition, he said PAHs are toxic to mammals, birds, fish, frogs, and plants, and are particularly harmful to rivers and creeks that received runoff from municipal storm sewers, wreaking havoc on the ecology and health of those ecosystems.

The Department of Public Works has discontinued use of the sealants on city projects, and Home Depot, Lowes, Menards, and True Value and Ace Hardware no longer carry coal tar sealer products (although the product is still available with certain contractors).

Austin banned coal tar sealants in 2006, and just four years after the ban Ladybird Lake in Austin saw a 58% reduction in PAH levels. A 2012 Minnesota Pollution Control Agency study estimated the cleanup costs of PAHs to be between \$1-5 billion in contaminated storm water ways in the Twin Cities area alone.

The proposed ordinance – cosponsored by **Alderman Nik Kovac** and **Alderman Michael J. Murphy** – is expected to be heard by the full Common Council at its February 7 regular meeting at City Hall.