



HOW TO KNOW WHEN TO REPAIR, RESURFACE OR REPLACE YOUR RUNNING TRACK

Running tracks are an important part of the athletic facilities at most schools and depending on the amount of traffic your track sees, the quality of materials used to build your track, and the quality of construction will determine how long your track lasts. There may be repairs, resurfacing, or replacement that will be required to keep your track running smoothly and keep athletes safe and performing at their best. Knowing when something can be repaired versus replacing or resurfacing can sometimes be difficult.

When building a track, the asphalt/concrete base and the aggregate/stone subbase need to be installed properly with proper drainage. In order to make sure it is done correctly, a geotechnical survey should be performed at the beginning of the project. This below-ground investigation will determine the compressibility, strength, and other characteristics to ensure the ground under the track will remain stable. If not installed properly the aggregate/stone subbase may shift, which will lead to cracks in the asphalt/concrete base and surface. Movement in the aggregate/stone subbase is not normally covered under the warranty. A professional should analyze your track if you are finding cracks, especially near the edge or if the curbs are shifting.

Vice President at Hellas Construction, Bob Allison said, "Cracks can be very serious. Minor cracks may develop with the normal settling of the ground, but as long as the moisture transfer is limited by proper drainage there shouldn't be a problem. However, if cracks are showing up right after a track is installed, there may be a problem."

Cracks that go into the asphalt/concrete base can normally be fixed with a patch. They would cut out a section of the track, repair the asphalt/concrete base, and then replace the top surface in that small area. However, reflective cracks are cracks that go into the asphalt/concrete base and deep down below, coming from underneath that asphalt/concrete base, and they usually mean that there is a problem below the aggregate/stone subbase, in the foundation.

"Nothing is maintenance free," said Allison. "Tracks need to be washed once a year and swept with a light bristle broom." He said repairing gouges as they appear helps extend the life of the surface. Nicks or gouges in the surface, can be repaired, by filling them in with the same material that was used to build the track. Most track systems come with a five-year warranty. Some tracks may last five to seven years if they are maintained properly. "Each track wears different, depending on the amount of traffic and if preventative measures are used. Using a bridge to move maintenance equipment over a track will make the track last longer," Allison said.

If an asphalt/concrete base is separating from the top surface, it's called delamination. The top layer may need to be scraped off and a new top layer installed. Delamination is also when the top surface layer of the track is showing wear. If you see wear or have pieces of track coming up, you need to determine how much of the surface is still attached to the asphalt/concrete base of the track. Depending on how much is loose, will determine if the surface can be repaired or if it needs to be replaced. Sections that are loose can be cut out and replaced. The inner lanes of the track tend to show wear faster because more people use the inside lanes, since it's a shorter distance," Allison said. The poured in place, sealed track systems that have dings, cuts, or cracks, need to be fixed fast, so water doesn't get below the surface, which will heat up during the summer and start the delamination process faster. If there is enough wear and the black asphalt/concrete base is showing through the top layer or a lot of repairs or patches have been done, a resurface may be done as long as the surface is still adhered to the asphalt/concrete base. Resurfacing is



scraping off the top layer of track surface and reapplying that top layer. This will make the track look like new and hide the repairs.

As time goes on, the percentage of tracks that need serious work increases. Removing and replacing the asphalt/concrete base or aggregate/stone subbase may be needed if bumps, dips, and reflective cracks are forming on the track surface. If there are a lot of cracks or the planarity is off, they will have to go deeper under the asphalt/concrete base and do a geotechnical survey before total reconstruction. Total reconstruction is tearing out everything, the track surface, the asphalt/concrete base, the aggregate/stone subbase and all the layers below to stabilize the foundation.

The type of track system that is selected will also determine the amount of years your track surface will last. "If your old track was worn out, you may want to go up a level when replacing," Allison said.

"Remember, track surfacing is not indestructible," Allison said. "Any preventative measures and regular maintenance will go a long way into making your track surfaces last for many years to come."



Example of a surface crack.

Example of a dip in the track surface.
This would be a problem below the
subbase.



This is how they do a patch. They
cut out the track surface and had
to fix the asphalt before adding
the track surface back.



This is a delamination, where the top track surface is separating from the asphalt base.