

**PAVEMENT COATINGS  
TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL**



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June 20, 2011

Dr. Jerald Schnoor, Editor  
Environmental Science & Technology  
4317 Seamans Center  
Dept. of Civil & Environmental Engineering, University of Iowa  
Iowa City, IA 52242-1527  
Via E-mail: [est@uiowa.edu](mailto:est@uiowa.edu)

Dear Dr. Schnoor,

I am the Executive Director of the Pavement Coatings Technology Council (PCTC), and write to you today to request that *Environmental Science and Technology* withdraw a recently published paper (Watts *et al.*, 2010 (reference (1))) pending substantial revision:. This request is not made lightly, but because the paper contains at least one significant error of fact and one significant error of omission, each of which has profound implications for interpretation of the data and for conclusions that may be warranted based on the data.

The factual error is the paper's assertion in the published paper that refined tar-based sealer was applied to both sealed areas of the test lots (see *Materials and Methods: Study Design* in (1)). Prior to publication in *Environmental Science and Technology*, the authors stated both publicly and privately that test Lot A and test Lot B were sealed with two different materials. Documents available from and statements made by the sealer contractor indicate that the application proceeded as originally designed, so that Lot A was sealed with a refined tar-based sealer and Lot B with an asphalt-based sealant. PCTC asked an author of (1) how it was learned that Lots A and B were sealed with the same material. We were told the contractor admitted that a mistake was made in a telephone conversation with one or more of the authors – a conversation the contractor has stated never occurred. The facts of the study particulars are unclear, and discovery of the facts at this time is hampered by the failure of the study researchers to analyze the materials applied to the surfaces at the time of application. That said, documents available from the contractor indicate a strong likelihood that different materials were used to seal the two lots, which substantially alters data evaluation and interpretation and inferences that may be drawn therefrom.

The omission is that the refined tar-based sealer used in Lot A, which is applied as an emulsion, failed to cure (and therefore, bind to the underlying pre-existing pavement) before the

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first rain event. A failure to cure is a rare event, but representatives of the PCTC with more than five decades of combined experience in the sealcoat industry visited the of University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center (UNHSC) during the course of the study (in November 2008), and informed the study directors that failure to cure and the resulting wash-off of a significant percentage of the sealer material was the one and only explanation for the observations made during the first rain and sampling event on October 6, 2007. Again, it is self-evident that the failure of the sealer to bind with underlying pavement, and resulting wash-off during the very first rain event is significant information, with profound implications for data evaluation and interpretation, as well as for conclusions that may be drawn from the data.

I understand that you may wish to look into these matters independently before withdrawing the paper, but time is of the essence since the flawed paper published in your well-respected journal already is being cited by groups opposed to the small, mostly family-owned businesses engaged in sealcoating.

Please let me know whether you will grant this request, or should you need more information.

Yours truly,



Anne P. LeHuray

cc: Mark W. Huddleston, President, University of New Hampshire  
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- (1) Watts, AW, Ballestero, TP, Rosen, RM and Houle, JP. Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Stormwater Runoff from Sealcoated Pavements. *Environ. Sci. Technol.* **2010**, *44* (23), pp. 8849-8854.

