

# Frequently Asked Questions: Potholes

## How are potholes created?

Water sinks through cracks in the old or weakened road surface.

The water is soaked up by the road bed under the asphalt surface which is a mix of rock or gravel and sand that supports the road. It may also be partly concrete.

In the winter months the repeated freezing and thawing of the road surface water helps to break up the road surface especially where it is already weakened.

The traffic moving over this fragile surface pushes the water through the saturated roadbed causing it to weaken and parts of asphalt begin to sink into the eroded parts underneath.

As vehicles continue to pass over the surface it eventually cracks, parts of the asphalt become loosened and a pothole is formed.

## How do you repair a pothole?

It depends on the size of the pothole and the type of road.

For example, on a residential road we may use the spray injector method but on a high speed grid road we may cut out and fill the pothole. Here are some of the methods that we use:

### Cut out and fill

A shape is cut around the pothole using an asphalt saw. The damaged asphalt surface is removed and a hot mix of bitumen and chippings is added to the cut out area. This is then smoothed over and compacted using a wacker.

### Spray injection patching

High-velocity air removes any debris from the pothole. Next a cold bitumen emulsion is used to seal the pothole at the edges to protect and prevent surface water getting in.

Finally a mix of hot bitumen emulsion (asphalt) mixed with chippings is sprayed into the hole and then evened out.

Potholes can be repaired in just a few minutes so can repair several on one section of road in a short time.

### Temporary repair

For certain locations only a temporary repair is possible to make a pothole safe until a planned permanent repair can be made.

In these cases a cold mix of bitumen and chippings is used to fill the hole. This is then smoothed over and compacted.

## How long does it take to repair a pothole?

All potholes reported to us are inspected. Our inspectors will go out and assess the pothole. Depending on the size, depth and type of road, a repair will be scheduled in. Potholes will be repaired within 2-24 hours if they are considered unsafe. Other potholes will be repaired within 28 days.

## I reported a pothole and it's not been repaired?

If the pothole meets our emergency criteria then it will be scheduled in for immediate repair after a visual risk assessment. If it does not we will schedule it in for repair later on and if we have several defects on one road it is more cost effective to do them all in a single visit.

When you report an issue to us you will receive a reference number beginning with 'FS'. Use this number to get an update on your reported issue.

## How much does it cost to fill potholes?

There isn't one cost per pothole. They appear on all types of road in different shapes and sizes. To repair potholes on the busy grid roads for example requires a lot of planning and traffic management we may even need to use temporary traffic lights. All this is very costly and we have a limited budget. This is why we have to use criteria to tackle the ones that are more of a safety issue and to use our resources as effectively as possible.

## Isn't it cheaper in the long run to do proper repairs rather than temporary ones?

Sometimes we don't have enough time to do a permanent repair on a pothole as it may need filling quickly to keep the road safe. The pothole could also be part of an underlying issue with the road surface underneath.

Also the weather can have a serious affect on when and how we carry out repairs, we can't use the hot bitumen on a cold day for instance.

Potholes tend to form mainly during the cold, wet months of the year - the worst conditions to carry out road repairs!

## Can't you just resurface the roads and stop potholes from forming?

We have over 800 miles of carriageway across Milton Keynes that we are responsible for. Even if we had the funding to resurface everywhere, by the time it was finished there would be parts where potholes would be forming.

The road surface is subject to all weathers, heavy vehicles and high volumes of traffic. This puts pressure on the roads all the time.

