

Pothole FAQs

Q. How do potholes form?

A. Potholes begin to form when moisture penetrates the pavement surface and reaches the soil underneath the pavement. When that moisture freezes, it will expand and push the pavement upward.

When the moisture thaws, the soil will return to its previous level, but the pavement will remain heaved. As vehicles pass over the raised pavement, the road surface begins to crack and over time a cavity is created below the pavement.

Q. How is a pothole repaired?

A. The defect (or hole) is swept free of loose debris, coated with a thin layer of tack, filled with asphalt, and then smoothed flat using a roller.

Q. What does the city mean when it says “hot-mix” or “cold-mix”?

A. Cold-mix asphalt is generally used only during the colder months. It is considered only a temporary repair because the cold-mix asphalt does not adhere well to the pavement surface.

A hot-mix patch does adhere well to the pavement and a patch made with it can last from one to several years.

Q. Can potholes be filled in the winter?

A. Yes, see previous question discussing hot and cold-mix asphalt.

Q. Why do so many potholes occur in the spring?

A. Spring is the time of year when the freeze-thaw cycle is most active. As snow melts, the pavement sub base and sub soils can become very soft. This is why most units of local government impose weight restrictions on larger vehicles during the spring.

Q. How many crews does the city have repairing potholes?

A. The number of crews will depend on the time of year, and the weather on any given day. During the spring, we can dispatch as many as 13 three-person crews for this purpose.

Q. How do I report a pothole?

A. Call our Street Maintenance office at (651)-266-9700, or email your report to pothole@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Q. What information should I have when I call to report a pothole?

A. Be prepared to give us a precise location of the pothole, and a number where we can reach you during the day.

Q. Once I report a pothole how long does it take for it to be repaired?

A. In most instances we can repair the pothole within 48 hours of it being reported to our Street Maintenance office

Q. Will driving over the patches harm my car?

A. No, the patch should not cause any damage to your car.

Q. Why aren't all potholes fixed right away?

A: The City cannot repair a pothole until it knows about a pothole. That is why reporting potholes to the city are very important.

When a call comes in about a pothole, the city tries to prioritize pothole repairs based upon the type of street, the size of the pothole, and the availability of crews. We try to repair all potholes within 48 hours of receiving notification.

Q: If there is a pothole and I hit it, the city will pay for the repairs to my car, correct?

A: Not necessarily. Before the city will make payment for your vehicle, the city had to have prior notice of the pothole, and the city had to have failed to make repairs *within a reasonable amount of time* with the available crews.

Since potholes develop frequently and often in our cold climate, notice often does not occur, making it unlikely that the city had prior notice of the pothole prior to you striking it. That means that the city *will probably not be responsible* for your damages.

Q. How do I file a claim if my car is damaged by a pothole?

A. Contact the City Clerk's office for a claim form at (651)-266-8688.

Q. Will the city fill the potholes in the alley?

A. It depends, if your alley has been designated an "improved alley," then yes. If you're uncertain about the status of your alley, contact Scott Brimer at (651)-266-6225. Potholes on improved alleys can be reported to our Street Maintenance division at (651)-266-9700.

Q. There is pothole on the highway on/off ramp, who do I contact?

A. Highways and their on/off ramps are the responsibility of the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Call (651)-296-3000 to report.