



CLEAN WATER ADVOCACY PROJECT Coal Tar Sealant Ban - Suggested Activities

In recent years, several studies have been published about the risks to human and ecosystem health from polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). These organic compounds are toxic, carcinogenic and cause birth defects. U.S. Geological Survey research showed that the largest source, about half, of PAHs in lakes is attributable to dust transported by stormwater runoff from pavement sealcoated with products containing coal tar ash.

Alternative, safer products are available for sealcoating pavement. In the interest of the public health and the health of our environment, use of PAH-containing sealants should be eliminated. States such as Minnesota, and numerous municipalities have instituted bans on sales and use of coal tar sealants. Local Leagues of Women Voters and other groups of concerned citizens may wish to take actions in their own communities to stop the use of such sealants.

Freshwater Future, an organization that works for the healthy future of the Great Lakes waters, first brought this issue to the attention of the League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region in 2014. Freshwater Future has gathered information and developed resources for advocates to use in working toward a coal tar sealcoat ban (see <http://freshwaterfuture.org/ourissues/coal-tar-sealants/>). We encourage the use of their materials with Freshwater Future's permission; the suggested activities in this document are based on their work.

Local advocates will know best what will work in their communities. The following specific actions are suggestions, but may be supplemented with additional activities. If your group chooses to take on this project, please let us know, and be sure to report your results.

1. Identify and contact hardware stores in your community. See what they carry, and if they don't carry coal tar-free sealant, ask that they commit to adding it or switching to it entirely.
2. Ask to make 5 minute presentations on coal tar sealants at meetings of local environmental groups. Ask them to join your efforts.

3. Contact your local governments (municipalities, park districts, school districts, and up) to find out who to talk to about their use of sealants and if they will commit to the safer version.

4. Ask to make 5 minute presentations to governmental committees and commissions involved in environmental concerns. Ask for bans on sale and use of coal tar sealants.

5. Arrange meetings with elected officials to present information and ask them to sponsor legislation instituting bans of PAH-containing products.

6. Write an article for your newsletter and other local publications to educate the public and publicize where they can buy the safer sealant if they choose to sealcoat their own driveways.

7. Contact local contractors to find out their awareness and ask them to commit to using the safer sealant.

8. Post on social media about asking for coal tar free sealant at hardware stores and from contractors.