

Pothole Repair

The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) is responsible for the filling of potholes and the repair of other road surface problems within the City’s jurisdiction. Residents are encouraged to call the Pothole Repair Hotline or use the PDX Reporter smart phone application 24 hours a day. Crews strive to respond to each location and resolve the issue within 20 business days.

What causes potholes?

Sun, heat, and vehicle loads can break down roads, but the biggest enemy of a road is water. Water seeps into the pavement through cracks caused by the stress of heavy traffic loads and saturates the aggregate base, a mixture of rock, gravel, and sand beneath the asphalt. Vehicles passing over the pavement force water, along with small particles of the aggregate base, up and out of existing cracks in the asphalt. Over time, the loss of fine particles from the aggregate base results in voids, which eventually cause the aggregate base and the asphalt layer above it to sink, forming a pothole.



Pothole on NE Grand Ave, January 2009: A pothole is a bowl-shaped hole caused by localized disintegration of the pavement surface. Potholes are a structural form of deterioration.

Pothole hotline 503-823-BUMP (2867)

Given the City’s limited budget and staff and the size of the infrastructure, PBOT relies heavily on citizen involvement to help keep streets safe. Please notify the City with the following pothole information: street location address, nearest cross street or block address, your name, phone number, and email address. Your phone number enables us to contact you to obtain additional information we need to respond.

Response times

Within 5 business days of a citizen report of a pothole, staff will contact the citizen by phone if possible, validate the reported location, investigate the road defect, forward data to the appropriate group, and prepare paving slips for crews to repair the pothole. Within 20 business days of a citizen report, street paving crews will make pothole repairs.

Portland-maintained streets only

The City of Portland Bureau of Transportation maintains over 4,700 miles of public city streets. Private streets and undeveloped streets within the city limits are maintained by property owners. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) also maintains streets within the city limits that are state highways.

To report potholes in jurisdictions outside Portland, please use the following phone numbers:			
Beaverton 503-526-3709	Gresham 503-618-2525	Milwaukie 503-786-7600	Lake Oswego 503-635-0280
Clackamas County 503-650-3262	Multnomah County 503-988-5050	Washington County 503-846-7623	ODOT Freeways 503-283-5859

Response process

The pothole reports entered in the City's TrackIT service request program are checked daily. Upon receiving a valid report, staff determine that the street is a Portland-maintained street, call the citizen, and obtain any additional information needed to respond to the report. If the location is not a Portland-maintained street, staff call the citizen and give them contact information for the appropriate jurisdiction. Staff sort valid reports by geographic area.

A supervisor travels to each location, investigates the reported road defect, and prepares a paving slip for each verified location. Repairs are prioritized and organized by geographic area of the city to maximize efficiency. A two-person crew repairs potholes on residential streets. A five-person crew repairs potholes on arterials and major city traffic streets, where traffic control is needed for safety. A crew dispatched to a reported location will typically repair two or three more potholes on the same street.

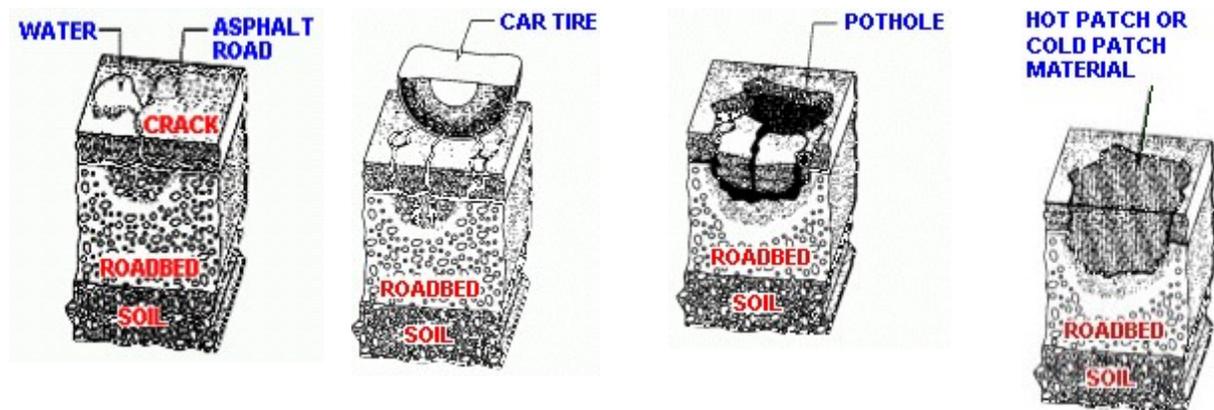
How a pothole forms

Rainwater sinks through cracks in old or weakened asphalt. The water saturates the road's aggregate base - the mixture of rock, gravel, and sand that makes up the asphalt's roadbed and supports the road.

Vehicles passing over the road force fine particles of the roadbed up and out of cracks in the asphalt (called pumping). Loss of fine particles from the aggregate base results in voids.

These voids cause the aggregate base and the asphalt layer above it to sink. As the asphalt sinks into these eroded portions of the roadbed, it eventually cracks under the continued impact of vehicle tires. Chunks come loose.

Holes may be patched with cold patch or hot patch material, depending on weather or other conditions.



Graphics from King County Department of Transportation

Is it a pothole?

Other types of road defects may appear as a pothole but are caused by different factors and may require different repair methods.

Sinkholes occur when the soil below the aggregate base has washed away, causing the aggregate base and asphalt layer to sink. Sinkholes are generally caused by a broken water or sewer line where the water or effluent leaks out under the surface, eroding the aggregate base by carrying particles away. They are typically deeper than potholes.

Delaminations are formed when the upper asphalt concrete layer becomes detached and breaks apart from the underlying layer. Delaminations, or delams, can appear as very shallow potholes. They are typically not as deep as potholes or sinkholes.

Trenches are rectangular excavations in the roadway. These cuts are made by utility companies and other City bureaus to reach underground utility lines; i.e. sewer, water, gas, and electric. Over time, similar to potholes and sinkholes, trenches can experience roadbed erosion and settling.