

SIDEWALK REPAIR TIPS

The following information is intended to answer some of the most often asked questions about sidewalk repair. The information provided is general in nature and may not apply to all situations. If you need clarification or more specific information, please call Caroline Tom at (925) 313-7007

Why is this my responsibility?

You live in an unincorporated area of Contra Costa County, and the County has the responsibility to insure that improvements within the road right-of-way are properly maintained. The County does not accept responsibility for maintaining sidewalks within the County's road right-of-way.

Chapter 22 of the California Streets and Highways Code places the maintenance and repair of "sidewalk" improvements installed within the public road right-of-way on the property owner of a given frontage section. In addition, County Ordinance 2008-24 heightens the liability on the property owner if a member of the public is injured as a result of the property owner's failure to maintain the sidewalk in a safe condition.

When a tripping hazard is reported, we are required to notify the property owner of the sidewalk tripping hazard, and to request that the property owner make the necessary sidewalk repair to eliminate the tripping hazard.

May I just remove the sidewalk?

No, you may not remove the sidewalk. Once a pedestrian facility is constructed it becomes part of the public right of way and cannot be removed, blocked, changed, or even repaired without an encroachment permit and permission from the County.

Do I have to apply for a permit?

Yes you do. Any work in the road right-of-way requires an encroachment permit. This insures that the work is performed in accordance with applicable construction codes and standards.

An encroachment permit can be obtained from Bob Hendry, at the Application and Permit Center, 30 Muir Road, Martinez, California 94553, (925) 674-7744.

How much is a permit?

The County Board of Supervisors sets permit fees. The fee for this permit is \$135.00. The permit fee pays for two items: \$35.00 for the cost of the permit and \$100.00 for inspection of the work. The inspector usually makes two trips to the site. The first trip is for inspection of the underlayment (the base) and forms that the new concrete is poured into, and second trip is for the inspection of the finished job (to check for matching grade and finish, as well as errors made in the pour).

Who can do this work for me?

We highly recommend that you hire a licensed concrete contractor. You may hire an individual worker or do the work yourself, but make sure whoever does the job is skilled in this work. Remember, if the work does not meet code requirements it will have to be done again.

How do I find a good contractor?

The yellow pages are a good place to start. Also talk to friends who have had similar work done or to people you may know who are in the construction business. Contractors contacted by your neighbors may want to bid on your work. Ask for references and addresses of jobs in your area by each contractor who bids on your job. Make sure all bids are in writing and include all work that may be related to the sidewalk repair (removal of tree roots or repair of existing subsurface drainage systems are examples of possible hidden problems). You may also want to check with the Contractors License Board and the Better Business Bureau for complaints or problems involving your bidders.

We cannot recommend contractors to you since this may lead to a conflict of interest.

How much will this cost?

Costs will vary from job to job. We strongly recommend obtaining at least three bids if you decide to use a contractor. It is difficult to provide you with an average cost for sidewalk replacements. Small jobs with less than 100 square feet typically range from \$1,000 to \$2,500. Multiple bids will give you the best indication of whether you are getting a fair price.

This sounds expensive. Is there any way I can cut my costs?

Form a group. If there are several property owners close to your site who have also received notice to make similar repairs you can form a cooperative group to cut costs. Contractors have fixed costs that remain the same whether they do your small job or every job on the block. When these costs are spread over several different jobs all participants will save. In addition, if all group participants use the same contractor our inspector can check all the sites in one trip. In such a case we will allow the group to purchase one permit to cover all sites. Rather than the regular \$135.00 per site permit cost, a multiple site group will be charged the basic permit fee of \$35.00, plus an hourly charge for the inspections. For example, if ten sites on your street join together and the hourly fee and permit fee total \$300, then each individual property owner's share would be \$30.00. Remember that all participants must use the same contractor, and the sites must be close enough to make the inspections efficient. If you want to form a group or wish to join one, call Caroline Tom at (925) 313-7007 for further information.

One more tip

Some property insurance companies may reimburse you for all or part of the repair costs. Check your policy and talk to your insurance representative.

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