

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT POTHOLES

SDOT SAYS IT FILLS POTHOLES WITHIN THREE BUSINESS DAYS, BUT THE POTHOLE IS STILL THERE. WHAT'S GOING ON?

There are several reasons why we may not have made the repair you requested:

Weather conditions have created a backlog: There are seasonal variations in the amount of new potholes that are created. When there is a significant backlog, SDOT will put extra crews on the job of filling potholes until the backlog is gone.

Can't find the pothole: Sometimes we are given insufficient information or there may be a car parked over the pothole when we arrive, hiding it from view. If we have the name and telephone number of the person who reported the pothole, we call for a better description of the location.

Utility cuts: Some of the potholes reported are the responsibilities of other parties to fill. The agencies or private contractors who dig into the street to work on underground utilities must either repair the street pavement or pay SDOT to make the final, permanent repair. If the "utility cut" is not properly repaired, the area of the excavation can sink, leaving what can appear to be a pothole. When these are reported, we may require the utility to return and correct the paving. This may take longer than three business days.

Utility covers: When entrances to underground utilities become worn, the owners of the utility must repair cracked or damaged pavement around the rim.

Railroad Tracks: SDOT is not allowed to work within four feet of railroad tracks. This area must be repaired by the railroad. Repairs in the area we are responsible for within 25 feet of railroad tracks may take longer than 72 hours because we have to coordinate with the railroad.

Off to the side of the road: Sometimes a pothole forms off to the side of the roadway, especially when drainage is inadequate and the area is used for parking. These areas are usually the responsibility of the adjacent property owner to maintain. When a street is fully improved, these areas include a planting strip, sidewalk, and curb. An SDOT Street Use inspector can verify if the pothole is in the part of the right of way that is the responsibility of the property owner.

Can't be repaired as a pothole: Some defects that are reported as potholes are really some other kind of problem that can't be repaired as a pothole. Sometimes it is a rough or rutted surface of a road that needs to be repaved or totally rebuilt from the base to the surface. Other times it is a void or sink-hole, a crumbled street edge, or pavement with layers of asphalt that have become separated (delaminated), or a long fissure or crack. A few streets in Seattle are surfaced with a very thin layer of liquid asphalt (containing no aggregate) covering bricks or paving stones. Defects in these streets cannot be fixed as a pothole. While most defects can be repaired, it may take longer, and some processes, such as crack seal

or chip sealing are only done in the summer. If there is a safety hazard, SDOT crews will set barricades around the problem area or they may close a lane.

HOW DO I KNOW IF WHAT I AM REPORTING CAN BE REPAIRED AS A POTHOLE OR NOT?

We don't expect everyone to be able to distinguish among pavement defects. We encourage you to report any type of pavement defect that is of concern to you, especially if it appears hazardous. If we can't make an immediate repair, we may be able to repair it later. If needed, we will block off the area to maintain safety.

DOES SDOT FILL POTHoles ON RESIDENTIAL STREETS?

SDOT fills potholes on paved residential streets. On streets that are not paved with concrete or asphalt, such as gravel roadways or streets with chip-sealed surfaces (emulsion embedded with crushed rock), repairs may need to wait until the street can be graded or resealed.

DOES SDOT FILL POTHoles IN ALLEYS?

Property owners are responsible for the alleys next to their property. SDOT fills potholes on alleys paved to City standards (typically concrete), but unimproved alleys (those not paved to City standards) are not considered part of the City's street system and are not maintained SDOT. Alley maintenance funds are scarce. If a paved alley is damaged to the extent that there is a safety or mobility problem, SDOT will make pothole patch repairs as possible. More extensive repairs are likely to be conducted by the abutting property owners.