

Asphalt Overlay Estimate Checklist

Experienced, honest and professional asphalt contractors are hard to find. I know this because after almost 2 decades in the business and several years running AllAboutDriveways.com, I've spoken to hundreds of asphalt contractors from all around the country and most of them want to steer as clear from me as they can! They don't want to be held accountable for anything! Their only motivation is profits! As a matter of fact, as you go through this checklist they'll be amazed at your vast amount of knowledge about asphalt and may even ask you how you know so much! When you tell them... "I learned from AllAboutDriveways.com", as history has proven, they may very well walk away from the job without even giving you an estimate! Why? Simply because they know they can't trick you or rip you off! **Only the honest and ethical companies want to be associated with AllAboutDriveways.com!**

If you take this list seriously, I can assure you it will be well worth the investment of your time!

#1) Always get at least 2 to 3 estimates!

Always get at least 2 to 3 estimates before making any decisions on whom to choose for your project. Of all of the complaints we receive about contractors, they usually start off with "The contractor told me we'll give you a great deal if we can get started today"! And most of the time... that was the only estimate they acquired!

#2) Is the company a member of AllAboutDriveways.com?

If they say yes:

Don't just take their word for it! Visit our website at <https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/pros/> and verify they are in fact a member! Search for their company name by phone number. Be sure their company name and phone number matches EXACTLY what's on our website. There should be no variation of their name in any way. As an example, we had a member whose company name was "xxxxxx Asphalt & Concrete **Specialists**" and a company who claimed they were a member said they were "xxxxxx Asphalt & Concrete **Services**". Unfortunately... that homeowner ended up losing over \$6K! Had the homeowner verified the company's membership, they would have easily identified they were **not** a member of AllAboutDriveways.com! **If they do not appear in search results... they are NOT a member!!**

If they are in fact a verified member:

I take what I do very seriously and **I do more to prescreen contractors than ANY OTHER WEBSITE OUT THERE that I am aware of and I will NEVER recommend a company I don't trust on my referral list! PERIOD!**

If the company that has given you an estimate is listed as one of my Official Registered Members, I trust them and I KNOW YOU CAN TOO! If any of the companies that have provided you with an estimate are in fact a verified member... there is no need to put them through the scrutiny of the rest of this checklist!

Why not? See what contractors must endure to be listed as one of my Official Members!

Go to: <https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/contractor-screening-process/>

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If the company is NOT a member:

Be sure to add a checkmark to each and every question on this list! Don't feel uncomfortable asking these questions and don't let ANY CONTRACTOR intimidate you or make you feel as if you're being too picky! After all... it's YOUR hard earned money that you're spending on your driveway. You have every right to do your due diligence! Be sure to also watch the video "Driveway Overlays" from my video series "The Most Common Ways Asphalt Installation Contractors Rip Us Off And How To Avoid Them".

Go to: <https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/asphalt-driveway-overlay/>

#3) How long has the company been in business?

This is a great question to ask but by no means can you just take their word for it. There are a lot of companies out there who say they've been in business for much longer than they actually have been. They may tell how long they've been **IN** the business as an answer to that question! I've been in the driveway business for 15 years... but AllAboutDriveways.com has only been in business for about 4 years! In today's internet age, a little bit of investigation online will reveal whether they're telling the truth or not! Do they have a website? Can you find reviews about their company and if you can, do the phone numbers match? On the other hand, just because the company is a new company doesn't necessarily mean that they are not experienced enough or trustworthy. At least 1 year in business is one of our requirements to list a company on our website. Consider making that one of your rules also.

#4) Is the contractor/company supplying you with a written proposal?

I can't tell you how many times I've had a homeowner contact me to complain about their contractor and they have **nothing** in writing. **Do not accept anything but a clear and concise proposal that has all aspects of the job described in detail and is printed and signed by both you and the contractor before allowing any work to begin.** Everything discussed should be specified on the agreement or added to the agreement as an addendum. This protects you **and** the contractor. **Do not accept verbal agreements.** With a written agreement, the contractor knows exactly what you're expecting and you know exactly what you're getting and the price you're paying for it! **Do not accept a typed up email as your agreement!** Reputable companies will provide you with a written proposal on company letterhead. Written proposals will also help you compare apples to apples with other contractors that are bidding on your project!

#5) Will the contractor/company be subcontracting the entire job, parts of the job, 1 part of the job or is the job performed all "in house"?

While on rare occasions a reputable contractor/company may have to subcontract a specialized portion of a job, **NEVER** do business with a company that subcontracts the entire job or the majority of the job. If problems arise... who's responsible and who's going to honor the warranty becomes a hot potato! No one wants to take responsibility for any mistakes or issues and you get left with a problematic driveway and a warranty that really doesn't exist! Cut out the middleman and do business with companies that perform the work "in house" with their own equipment and full time, experienced employees.

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#5) Continued:

Instances where an asphalt contractor may need to subcontract a portion of your job may be:
Applying the tack coating, hiring laborers for unskilled labor work. Usually no more than 1 person, certainly not an entire crew.

#6) Will the contractor/company be removing and replacing failed areas prior to installing the asphalt overlay?

Patching Failed Areas: While it's not entirely uncommon for a contractor to pave a driveway in one day, some contractors love the "get in and get out fast" approach to maximize profits and will not patch areas that **should be** patched prior to installing the overlay. This includes alligatored areas, failed areas, potholes and low spots. These areas should be removed, the soil excavated and a new durable base material installed and compacted if necessary. (This will essentially solve the problem that' could be causing the asphalt to fail in the first place). Remember an overlay is only as good as what it's being installed on! Make sure the contractor indicates the square feet or square yards that will be removed and replaced separately from the entire area that is being overlaid.

#7) Will the contractor/company be removing and replacing areas next to the garage, sidewalks and street for proper drainage and smooth transitions prior to installing the asphalt overlay?

In order to obtain positive drainage away from the garage or home, some areas may need to be removed and patched back lower or equal to the thickness of the new overlay for #1 proper water drainage and/or #2 a seamless, smooth transition into the garage, onto sidewalks or onto the street. Some contractors will not do this and either A) Leave a lip equal to the thickness of the overlay being installed (which can cause water problems and/or standing water) or B) attempt to feather the asphalt into these areas, which is NOT the proper way to install an asphalt overlay.

On the other hand, some contractors may mill the asphalt next to these areas equal to the thickness of the new overlay for a smooth transition onto these areas as long as positive drainage can be achieved. If the contractor you hire won't be removing and replacing these areas, make sure they include milling in their bid.

DO NOT ACCEPT FEATHERING THE ASPHALT FOR TRANSITIONS! It will not last!

Watch this video: <https://www.allaboutdriveways.com//asphalt-driveway-overlay/#toc-item-5>

#8) Will the contractor/company be sealing all cracks with a hot pour rubberized sealer prior to installing the asphalt overlay?

Sealing all cracks ¼" and wider with a hot pour rubberized sealer prior to installing the new asphalt overlay can help to minimize reflective cracking through the new asphalt once it's been installed.

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#8) Continued -

While this can slightly add to the cost of the overall job, it's certainly worth the additional cost. **Cracks wider than 1 ½" to 2" wide and wider should be filled with hot asphalt.**

#9) Will the contractor/company be cleaning the existing surface and applying a tack oil (asphalt glue) prior to installing the asphalt overlay?

Some contractors love the "get in and get out fast" approach to maximize profits and will not prep the driveway properly before installing the asphalt. This includes cleaning the surface of the asphalt from all dirt and debris with hand blowers and wire brooms and then applying tack oil to the entire surface of the existing asphalt driveway. This very important step helps bond the new asphalt to the old asphalt.

#10) Will the contractor/company be applying a weed inhibitor before installing the overlay?

Deep cracks, hard to clean areas, and areas where vegetation meets the existing asphalt driveway should have a weed inhibitor applied to minimize vegetation growth.

#11) Is the contractor/company indicating the area in square feet or square yards on the proposal?

How do you know what you're getting if the contractor doesn't indicate the square feet or square yards on the proposal? All proposals should include the total area being paved by either square feet or square yards in writing! Don't allow a contractor to indicate "from the barn to the garage" or "from the garage to the street". Proposals should always indicate the total area.

#12) Is the contractor/company indicating the compacted thickness of the asphalt?

THIS IS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF YOUR PROPOSAL!

Make sure that the contractor has indicated **in writing** the compacted thickness of the asphalt! That means the thickness of the asphalt after it has been compacted with the asphalt rollers. After all of the equipment has been loaded and left the job, what is the final thickness? Just indicating a number like "1 ½" to 2 inches" or "2" without the word compacted is **NOT** sufficient. **Ask for the "compacted thickness" after completion, in writing, on the proposal!**

#13) Does the contractor/company offer a warranty?

The standard warranty in the industry is 1 year on workmanship and materials. Be sure and have a warranty in writing on the proposal! But remember, a warranty is only as good as the stability of the company that's offering it! What good is the warranty if the company is not stable enough to be around to honor it if something goes wrong?

#14) Is the contractor/company trying to sell you an “added warranty”?

Some contractors will attempt to sell an added warranty if you pay additional fees to have them seal the new asphalt overlay. This is ok provided the company will wait to seal the new asphalt after it's been installed for 3 to 6 months. **This is not ok if they want to seal it immediately after it's been paved!** New asphalt **MUST** cure for a minimum of 3 to 6 months before being sealed! **PERIOD!** If the contractor says they're going to seal it right away... it's a SCAM! Don't do it!

Watch this video: <https://youtu.be/bdhaS9vyC8A>

#15) Is the contractor/company requiring money down?

I'm not a fan of contractors asking for money up front AT ALL! Most reputable companies do not require money up front. However, there are some areas that contractors/companies require 50% down and the rest on completion. The **ONLY** way I would **EVER** give a company money up front is just like this: Tell the contractor that the moment his trucks, employees and equipment arrive and begin unloading, you will pay them their required money down. Some contractors may be concerned that a check can be cancelled. If that's the case, tell them you will pay them **in cash with a signed receipt! Be sure and get signed cash receipt!**

This way the company doesn't have to wait for a check to clear, they're comfortable with getting started and you're guaranteed they show up to do the job and don't take off with your money!

There's virtually zero risk for either one of you! That's it! No other way **PERIOD!**

#16) Is the contractor asking to be paid personally rather than in a company name?

Just about every complaint about an unethical contractor I receive, inevitably the payment/check was made to the contractor rather than to a company. While this is not a sure sign of an unethical contractor, it should raise some red flags as it may mean they are not a registered business! I would never do business with a company that is not a legitimately state registered company.

**This checklist is a great way to help you get as good of a job as possible but is not meant to be a guarantee of protection against unethical contractors, substandard work or improperly performed services or sub-standard materials. Patrick Mattingley or AllAboutDriveways.com is not responsible for any losses incurred in any way by using this checklist guide.*