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Our Unsealed Roads

Wakefield Regional Council looks after the fourth largest road network in South Australia, covering about 2728kms - it's the same distance as Adelaide to Perth. About 90% of the network is made up of unsealed roads.

'In a financial year, we will grade up to 5000km.'

Over time unsealed roads can suffer damage due to rain, heavy vehicles, traffic volume and traffic speed. Grading gives unsealed roads a freshen up. It works to improve the quality and longevity of a road, generally making it smoother.

With our four patrol graders, in a financial year we can expect to grade up to 5000km. It is an important activity that Council carries out all across the region.

Why don't we seal all of our roads?

Council is always working to provide the best infrastructure to our community. We have taken steps to seal more streets in our townships that have higher traffic and our *Township Sealing Program* lists streets we are anticipating to seal in the future.

However, sealing a road is not always the answer. Particularly where traffic volumes are low. Over the whole life time of a road, sealing can be more expensive than maintenance.

When is the best time to grade a road?

Moisture is a key ingredient to achieving the best outcome from grading. You might see more of our graders out and about after some rainfall because the moisture allows the loose gravel to compact and stay in better shape.

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Think about it like squeezing sand at the beach between your hands. When the sand is wet it binds easier and stays in shape, but when it's dry, it is loose and separates.

Grading is difficult during the Summer months when our roads become dry. Graders 'pull in' loosened gravel and spread it over the roads surface where it gets compacted.

Grading is not designed to fix potholes

Contrary to popular belief, grading does not repair potholes. The role of grading is to maintain the shape of a road – not its overall structure.

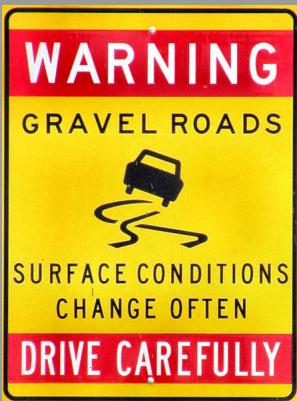


The main purpose of patrol grading is to provide a good running surface and to form crossfalls in the road so that water runs off and does not pool.

To completely repair a pothole the road will need to be 'ripped and reformed'. This is when the surface of the road is ripped, watered, reshaped and compacted.

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Tips for driving on unsealed roads

Slow down!

Driving quickly on unsealed roads causes more dust and gravel to sweep up off the road.

If possible, keep heavy vehicles off the road when it has been raining.

Roads are more vulnerable when wet and trucks can cause more significant damage to a wet road, especially one that has just been graded. In wet conditions, try to postpone truck movements until the road has dried.

Always drive to suit the conditions.

You need to drive to suit the conditions of the road. If a road is rough, slippery, or you're not used to driving on gravel roads, drive at a safe speed.

Expect the unexpected.

Never assume an unsealed road is going to be the same as it was the last time you drove on it, even if it is the same day.

'Each year Council will resheet about 50kms of road.'

Resheeting

As unsealed roads age they require 'resheeting' to replace their top surface. This is when 100mm of compacted gravel is placed on top of the existing road. Each year Council will resheet about 50kms of road.

Council has a *10-year Capital Works Plan*, detailing the resheets that are planned for unsealed road until 2029. However, roads not listed may also be considered as part of the annual budgeting process.



You can look at the progress of our patrol grading program on our interactive map located on our website – wrc.sa.gov.au/patrolgrading.

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