Warm-Mix Asphalt: Best Practices

3rd Edition

Ву

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Chapter 1	
Introduction	5
Background	5
A Short History of WMA	
Purpose and Methodology	9
Chapter 2	
WMA Technologies	11
Chemical Additives or Surfactants	
CECABASE RT	11
Evotherm	12
HyperTherm/QualiTherm	13
Rediset	14
Foaming Processes	
Accu-Shear	15
Advera WMA	17
AQUABlack WMA System	19
AquaFoam	20
Aspha-min	20
Astec Green Systems	21
Eco-Foam II	22
LEA (Low Emission Asphalt)	23
Meeker Warm Mix	25
Terex WMA System	26
Tri-Mix Warm Mix Injection System	26
Ultrafoam GX2 System	27
WAM Foam	28
Non-foaming Additives	
BituTech PER	28
LEADCAP	30
Sasobit	30
SonneWarmix	32
Thiopave	33
Chapter 3	
Benefits of WMA	37
Compaction Aid	37
Warm Mix in Racetracks	37
Cold-weather Paving	38
Longer Haul Distances	30

Less Restriction and Potentially More Paving Hours in Non-attainment Areas Specific Plant Concerns	40 40
·	40
Specific Pavement Rehabilitations	42
Reduced Fuel Usage	
Reduced Emissions	44
Greenhouse Gas Calculator	45
Improved Working Conditions	45
Chapter 4	
Best Practices for Mix Design, Production, and Placement	49
Mix Design	
Maintaining Adequate Baghouse Temperatures	
Remove Veiling Flights	
Increase Air Flow	
Duct Heaters	
Install Variable Frequency Drive (VFD) on Drum Drive or Slinger	52
Insulate Baghouse and Ductwork	
Drying Aggregate	53
Increase Aggregate Retention Time	53
Insulate Dryer Shell	54
Install VFD on Drum Drive	54
Reduce Stockpile Moisture Content	54
Burner Performance	57
RAP and RAS Recycling	57
Placement Changes	58
Compaction	58
Chapter 5	
Summary of Experience and Future Research Needs	59
Mix Design	
Guidance for Selection of Production Temperatures	
Long-term Performance	60
New-product Approval	
Quantification of Benefits	
RAP and WMA	
Summary	64
References	.65

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Introduction

Background

The United States Clean Air Act was passed into law in 1970. The first Earth Day was held that same year. Since that time, U.S. industries have worked to become better environmental stewards. The asphalt pavement industry has proven to be a leader, not just in implementing government-mandated technologies but also in seeking innovations to promote a cleaner planet and better working conditions for employees.

Members of the National Asphalt Pavement Association (NAPA) have taken the lead in a number of initiatives that have made asphalt plants better neighbors and enhanced working conditions for those involved in the production and construction of asphalt pavements. The asphalt industry has responded to a variety of government regulations, economic factors and changes in public attitudes. For example,

- Responding to the Clean Air Act of 1970, improvements in emission control technologies were developed. Wet scrubbers were developed first. The currently favored technology, baghouse filtration, has greatly reduced particulate emissions from asphalt plants.
- Rising oil prices and tightened supply during the two oil shortages of the 1970s spurred the development of new methods for reclaiming and recycling asphalt pavements. Improvements in milling machines and new methodologies for incorporating reclaimed asphalt pavement (RAP) and reclaimed asphalt shingles (RAS) have made recycling an industry standard, and asphalt is now the most recycled material in the U.S.
- Concerns about working conditions for paver operators have led to the development of engineering controls for highway-class asphalt pavers and best-practices guidance.
- Concerns about working conditions for crews involved in milling operations have led to the successful Silica/Milling Machine Partnership.
- Questions from the public about the impact of asphalt plants on communities provided the impetus for development of NAPA's Diamond Achievement Commendation.

In 2002, NAPA identified new technologies in Europe that held the promise of reducing production and construction temperatures. Research at the National Center for Asphalt Technology (NCAT) and elsewhere had previously shown that lowering the plant mix temperature even by 10 °F (6 °C) can markedly reduce the production of emissions from asphalt mixtures (Lange and Stroup-Gardiner 2007). A study tour of NAPA leaders was quickly put together. Following the study tour, NAPA and its partners in agencies and academia began to pursue the research and development work necessary for implementation.

Warm-mix asphalt (WMA) represents a group of technologies which allow a reduction in the temperatures at which asphalt mixes are produced and placed. These technologies tend to provide complete aggregate coating at lower temperatures and act as compaction aids. The mechanisms which allow better coating and compaction vary from one technology to another.

Conventional hot-mix asphalt (HMA) is typically produced at temperatures from 280 °F to 320 °F (140 °C to 160 °C). WMA is produced at 212 °F to 280 °F (100 °C to 140 °C).

So what is significant about WMA? Improvements in coating and compaction provide a number of potential paving benefits for asphalt contractors and their agency partners. Reduction in production temperatures provides a number of benefits related to sustainable development and improved working conditions. The range of potential benefits includes:

- Paving benefits
 - Compaction aid,
 - Ability to pave in cool ambient temperatures without sacrificing quality,
 - Ability to haul asphalt pavement mixtures longer distances and/or durations and still have the necessary workability to place and compact the mix,
 - Ability to incorporate higher percentages of RAP, while producing the mixture at reasonable temperatures, and facilitating placement and compaction,