

Dust on unsealed roads

Raised dust from unsealed roads can be annoying and inconvenient for affected residents and businesses. This information sheet explains the options and the challenges of reducing dust from unsealed roads.

Why does raised dust occur?

Many factors impact the level of raised dust on an unsealed road. These include weather and climatic conditions, road surface, vehicle speeds and traffic volume. Dust is predominately an issue in the summer months when road surfaces are extremely dry and deteriorate at an increased rate.

What can be done?

The options for reducing raised dust vary in cost and effect.

Sealing unsealed roads – Sealing of unsealed roads provides the best solution to dust issues, however it is also the most costly. Spray-sealing an unsealed road costs approximately \$100 per square metre and the cost is dependent on the size and location of the works. Council has limited budget available for road sealing and often this is not a practical option.

Grading roads – Council managed roads are regularly inspected by our Works Unit in accordance with our Road Management Plan. Information is also received from customer requests and/or community feedback. Our maintenance grading program aims to maintain the condition of unsealed roads to a safe standard that prolongs the life of the road and avoids costly intervention. Additionally, as part of the capital works gravel road resheeting program, unsealed roads which require a higher level of maintenance are resheeted with a layer of new gravel material to renew the road surface. However, increasing the frequency of grading or resheeting has limited benefits in terms of dust suppression.

Reducing speed limits – When vehicles travel at slower speeds usually less dust is generated. However, whether or not a road is sealed does not affect the speed limit. The default speed limit is 100 kilometres per hour in rural areas and 50 kilometres per hour in built up areas. A change to the speed limit must be approved by VicRoads and is assessed in accordance with state-wide guidelines that take into account traffic volume, type of vehicle usage and location. This ensures consistent speed limits across the state. VicRoads does not consider reducing dust to be a valid reason to reduce speed limits. The likelihood of having speed limits reduced to minimise dust is very low.

Installing dust warning signage – Some residents request signage in the belief that it will slow traffic down. There have been a number of instances within the shire where signs have been installed, with no change in driver behaviour. With little evidence to indicate its effectiveness, Council does not prioritise this kind of signage.

Dust suppressant – Dust suppression chemical treatments are only effective for approximately three months and cost up to \$4,500 per kilometre, and require additional road grading and watering treatments when applied. Due to the short term benefit and relative high cost of this treatment, Council does not use this option.

What can residents do?

Speak to your neighbours – Residential unsealed roads are often used mostly by those who live there. Residents can work together to decrease dust levels by reducing their speed, particularly during busy times of the day. Consider talking with your neighbours and visitors about the dust and why it is a good idea to drive slower. Research has found that drivers can reduce dust levels by almost 50 percent by slowing down from 50 to 35 kilometers per hour.*

Keep Council informed– If you are concerned about raised dust because of the number or speed of vehicles on your road, please contact Council via a customer service request to see whether traffic counters can be used to obtain a better understanding of traffic along your road.

*Source: Unsealed roads manual: Guidelines to good practice March 2009