

Manhole Covers on Precast Paving Blocks/Slabs or Tiles

1. Background

To enhance aesthetics as well as to minimize noise in trench excavation, it is an increasing trend to use precast paving blocks/slabs or tiles in pavement construction for footpaths. However, it is a normal practice that traditional manhole covers made of cast iron or steel frames with concrete infill are embedded in the precast paving. The distinct difference in the materials makes such covers standing out conspicuously from the background and causes disruption to the nice appearance of the paving. To overcome the problem, recessed manhole covers with paving block/slab/tile infill have been used in some precast paving areas and the result is found desirable. In the 35th UTLC Meeting on 13 January 1999, the Chairman encouraged members to make use of recessed manhole covers with paving block infill when footpaths of precast paving were encountered. A technical brochure illustrating such products (copy attached) was also distributed to UTLC members subsequently for reference.

2. Discussion in the JUPG

Nearly one year has elapsed since the said UTLC meeting but there appears to be little change in the practice of employing traditional manhole covers. It is therefore considered necessary to establish appropriate policy guidelines to streamline the practice. To avoid excessive burden on utility undertakings (UUs), it is suggested that replacement of traditional covers with recessed covers may take place when new precast pavings are constructed or when an existing footpath is to be reconstructed with precast paving. Along this line HyD proposed the following guideline in the Joint Utilities Policy Group (JUPG) meeting on 22.12.1999 for discussion:

“When HyD is to construct new precast pavings or to reconstruct a paved area with precast paving, UUs shall be requested to replace their manhole covers in the affected area by recessed covers with appropriate precast infill. HyD should provide the precast materials for the infill.”

The JUPG accepted the idea but expressed concern on the technical difficulties that might incur. It was finally concluded that the proposed guideline was supported by the JUPG in principle subject to the associated technical difficulties having been sorted out by the UTLC. In the JUPG meeting, members foresaw the following technical difficulties:

- ◆ the problems in fixing infill paving for small size covers; and
- ◆ labelling on covers for identification of utility types and owners.

3. Proposal

In view of JUPG's concern, the proposed guideline is elaborated as follows:

When HyD is to construct new precast pavings or to reconstruct a paved area with precast paving, UUs shall be requested to replace their manhole covers of size greater than 400 mm in either dimension in the affected area by recessed covers with appropriate precast infill. HyD should provide the precast materials for the infill while UUs are responsible for, inter alia, fabrication of the cover with the infill. For manhole covers of size not exceeding 400 mm, the existing practice of using metal covers without precast infill are permitted. In order to provide proper identification to the recessed manhole covers, one paving block/slab/tile in the cover can be replaced by an 'identification block/slab/tile' bearing the logo and/or other labelling materials of the organization.

4. The Way Forward

Subject to UTLC's endorsement on the elaborated guideline, HyD will inform JUPG of the decision. HyD will also disseminate the guideline to all Regions and project offices for compliance.

(As agreed in UTLC, recommendation to be effected on 17.7.2000.)

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