



Gavin Newsom, Mayor

Edward D. Reiskin, Director



Department of Public Works

BUREAU OF STREET-USE & MAPPING

875 Stevenson Street, Room 460, S.F., CA 94103

Barbara L. Moy, Bureau Manager

DPW Order No: 178,884

Guidelines for Inspection of Sidewalk Defects

Public Works Code Section 706 states that it is the duty of the property owner(s) to maintain sidewalks in front of and adjacent to their properties in good repair and condition.

The property owner is responsible for the repair and condition of the sidewalk fronting his/her property except in the following instances:

- When the damage is caused by City maintained trees (i.e., tree root damage).
- When the damage is in the sidewalk corner (angular corner or corner return).
- When the damage is related to a utility facility.
- Special instances where City maintains sidewalks, e.g. Market Street Bricks or Mission Street Tiles

When the Department of Public Works (DPW) inspects, or becomes aware of, sidewalk problems, it will inform the responsible party of sidewalk defects such as gaps, cracks, chips, displacement, holes, or other defects. The normal process to repair a sidewalk defect is the removal and replacement of the sidewalk as specified in the City's Standard Specifications (Section 204). *However, DPW Order 177,526 provides for alternative temporary repair methods (e.g. patching and grinding) that are available to property owners.* Note that this Order contains general guidance. Some conditions may warrant immediate attention.

This Order establishes DPW's guidelines to improve sidewalk accessibility within the area of the sidewalk most traveled by pedestrians and referred to in the *Better Streets Plan* (2009- page 98) as the "Throughway Zone". Sidewalk defects that impair pedestrian accessibility shall be identified as a priority for repair and must be corrected by the responsible party in a timely manner.

The Throughway Zone shall be defined as the area of sidewalk most traveled by pedestrians. Judgment by the inspector will be paramount in determining the Throughway Zone, but it can be described as the area which is 12 inches beyond any physical obstruction from the property line to within 12 inches of the closest obstruction adjacent to the curb (e.g., tree basin, parking meter, street light etc.). In the case of a narrow sidewalk where the "Throughway Zone" would be less than 48 inches, the area most traveled by pedestrians is defined as 12 inches beyond any physical obstruction from the property line and extending towards the curb.

The following defects found within the Throughway Zone most traveled by pedestrians are priorities for repair:

- (1) Vertical Displacement – where the sidewalk pavement, or curb, is displaced by ½ inch or more from the abutting pavement or curb.
- (2) Voids, cracks, chips, holes, gaps – where sidewalk pavement, or curb, has eroded leaving a ½ inch or more void, in width and/or depth, from abutting pavement or curb.


These measurements should account for existing grades, slopes and existing sidewalk patterns.

Exceptions to the prioritized pedestrian area should include missing / damaged sewer / utility box covers and curbs with defects that exceed 1 inch. In the case of a specific Request for Action, or as directed by your supervisor, please utilize Sections 1 and 2 for the entire sidewalk area.

These guidelines allow inspections and subsequent repairs to be conducted expediently. These guidelines are not meant to defer or relieve a property owner's responsibility to maintain defect-free sidewalks. In addition to areas identified by DPW that must be repaired, a property owner should also identify and repair any defect to the pavement in order to fully comply with Sec. 706 of the Public Works Code.

[ctrl + click to view Sidewalk Width and Zones](#)

Edward D. Reiskin, Director

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9/22/2010

 Edward D. Reiskin

Signed by Reiskin, Ed [View details](#)
on Wednesday, September 22, 2010 2:40 PM (Pacific Daylight Time)