

# Local

## Concrete will replace Prarie Film in heavy traffic areas

# Grounds department works to improve sidewalks

By DAVID CALVERT  
Battalion Reporter

If you have ever stubbed your toe or ruined the rim of your bicycle wheel going through one of those craters in the pebbly-surfaced sidewalks on the Texas A&M University campus, you have been introduced to Prarie Film. (Yes, that's the way the company spells it.)

The Texas A&M Department of Grounds Maintenance, however, is changing the use of the epoxy-rock in hopes of improving the material.

Prarie Film is used because it allows air and water to reach the root system of trees, said Eugene Ray, director of grounds maintenance. He said there are around 2,000 live oak trees on

campus that benefit from the material.

Ray said the department is in the process of patching and replacing the bad sections.

"We are taking out the epoxy-rock material and replacing it with harder concrete in places where pedestrian traffic is heaviest," he said.

Ray said he suspected the problems with Prarie Film surfaced because contractors who originally laid the material did not follow exact specifications.

The epoxy-rock must be mixed precisely as indicated in its instructions or the mix will not cure correctly, Ray said.

Ray also said crushed limestone is called for as a base for Prarie Film. The architectural engineers felt limestone was

too expensive and they substituted washed gravel instead. Washed gravel does not provide the same stable support that crushed limestone does, Ray said.

Ray also said Prarie Film was probably used too much when it was first developed.

"The epoxy-rock must be considered as an aid to trees," he said. "It was not developed as a total sidewalk material."

Ray said the epoxy-rock was developed and manufactured in Illinois and is marketed by a retail firm in Fort Worth. He also said the epoxy-rock costs nearly twice as much as concrete due to more materials and handling. This cost, however, is offset by the benefits trees get from Prarie Film.

Ray said there have been fewer problems with Prarie Film

since 1976 when the grounds department took over its installation. This was due to the department using the correct materials and following instructions.

"Anything that has gone wrong with the Prarie Film since we started putting it in has been due to something we did wrong," he said.

Ray said although the repairs were an inconvenience to students, they had to be made now.

"The epoxy-rock has to be installed when the average temperature is at least 55 degrees, but we prefer to work with it when it is in the 60s," he said. "This eliminates making the repairs during Christmas break."

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## Engineering doctorates decreasing

By TRACEY BUCHANAN  
Battalion Reporter

A dwindling supply of students in engineering doctoral degree programs is a key national crisis, says Dr. Robert Page, dean of Texas A&M's College of Engineering.

High salaries, which are offered to persons holding all levels of engineering degrees, lure engineers away from continuing studies, he said. The result is a shortage of people with doctorates in engineering and a critical shortage of engineering professors.

"We don't have attractive graduate fellowships to compete with the salary offers (of industries)," Page said. "Unless we can offer a fellowship to them that pays at least half of the salary they can get in industry, they probably will not accept the fellowship, unless there's some unusual circumstance."

Currently most engineering schools are offering fellowships that are about one-fourth of the starting salaries industries offer, he said.

In 1980 engineering graduates with doctoral degrees averaged a monthly starting salary of \$2,500, the Engineering Manpower Commission reported. Graduates with master's degrees in engineering averaged \$1,900 monthly and graduates with bachelor's degrees averaged \$1,700 monthly.

In the fall of 1980, 1,800 to 2,000 positions for engineers with doctorates were unfilled in the United States, Page said.

The number of students studying for doctoral degrees in engineering reached its peak in about 1972, he said. From 1972 to 1980 the number of persons holding engineering doctoral degrees dropped from 3,700 to 2,700, a 27 percent decrease, Page said. And about 1,000 of the 2,700 doctoral degrees were held by foreign students who returned to their own countries.

"The industry is so anxious to get the graduates at the bachelor's level that sometimes they forget that they need the upper-level graduates, too," Page said.

About two-thirds of the graduates with doctorates go into industrial work and one-third go into the academic area, Page said. Since doctoral degrees are essential for engineering professors, a crucial shortage of engineering teachers also exists.

Page is preparing a report about the shortage for the General Accounting Office of the federal government, because they recognize there is a problem, he said. Professional societies, congressmen and even industries admit a problem exists and corrective action is needed.

Even if the number of people working for doctoral degrees in engineering increases soon, the problem will persist for at least three to four years, Page said. It takes that long to get the degree.

## Chicken fan robs store seven times

United Press International  
NEW ORLEANS — For James Lacy, robbing the Jim Dandy Fried Chicken store in New Orleans was like "taking candy from a baby," police said. And it was — until he got caught. Lacy, 38, has been charged with robbing the restaurant on seven different occasions. The amounts ranged from \$37 to \$136.32. Business was so good for the robber that last Wednesday he hit the restaurant twice.

At 4 p.m. he got \$50, then at 7:05 p.m. he got \$64.89, said the police report. Police said they saw Lacy leaving the restaurant Friday with a bag in one hand and a gun in the other.