

staff photo by Peter Rocha

A. C. Holder, of the grounds maintenance department, puts down some epoxy rok near the Memorial Student Center. The glue and rock mixture is being tested as a substitute for Prarie film.

New solutions studied

# Glued rocks rolling

by Greg Trest

Battalion Reporter

The gravel holes and pebbly sidewalks around campus can turn a simple stroll to class into a strenuous walk through an obstacle course — all because of Prarie film.

Prarie film is the brand name of the epoxy resin and rock mixture used for some sidewalks on campus.

The rock originally was installed on campus to let air and water reach the root systems of the campus' approximately 2,000 live oak trees, which are worth about \$10,000 each. It was never intended for use on major pedestrian and vehicle thoroughfares, said Eugene Ray, director of grounds maintenance.

And the abuse it receives from vehicle traffic and excessive pedestrian use is one reason the Prarie film is in such disrepair, he said, explaining that some of the older film does not have adequate base material to support the heavy traffic.

The first Prarie film was laid in 1974 by contractors who used a loose gravel base instead of the crushed limestone that is now used. The gravel base did not compact enough to provide a firm foundation, Ray says. Instead, it tended to spread out under pressure, resulting in cracks in the top layer of film. Crews are repairing some

patches of Prarie film around campus; however, he says, the repairs can be made only under certain conditions. For example, the film has to be laid in temperatures averaging between 60 degrees to 80 degrees to bond correctly.

Furthermore, funds for the material and repairs must be located. The money allotted for epoxy repairs this fiscal year already has been spent. Repairs will not cease, Ray says, but only major problem areas can be fixed since funds must be drawn from other sources.

The grounds maintenance department is also testing alternate methods of repair, which may solve the problem more cheaply, he says.

One such method is overlay, in which more epoxy and gravel is laid over the hole in a thick layer to provide a strong bond instead of digging up an entire section and starting from scratch, Ray says.

Also being tested is a different brand of aggregate called Epoxy-rok, which, he says, is cheaper than Prarie film.

The maintenance department has also found that using smaller rocks in the mixture provides more contact, or bonding points per square inch. This makes the new material stronger, Ray says.

In the future the department will experiment with Turf Paver Blocks — large perforated concrete blocks that are laid in the ground to absorb most of pedestrians' weight. The blocks protect the root systems of trees

from compaction and allow grass to grow through the holes.

But in areas where trees will not be damaged, the old Prarie film is being torn up and replaced with cheaper cement.

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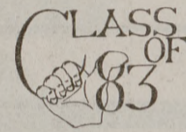
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