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## Smooth Move

BY: MARK GORDON | MANAGING EDITOR



Fixing potholes isn't the sexiest way out of the recession.

But for Aziz Tejar, an entrepreneur who runs a company that destroys drain grease in restaurants and hospitals by using live bacteria, pothole repair might just prove to be the best way.

"America is built on strip malls," says Tejar. "And strip

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Tejpar calls the system, and the new company behind it, B Pothole Free. The technology revolves around a patented, infrared asphalt heater that is placed over a pothole.

Then, using short, medium and long wave thermal induction, the temperature is raised to 200 degrees Celsius, so heat permeates the entire pothole. The heater is removed after about 10 minutes and a two-man crew reshapes the area with the new road material.

The area is then compacted down and smoothed over while still hot. The entire process takes about 20 minutes.

B Pothole Free charges \$99 for each standard size repair, which covers a pothole as big as 3 feet by 3 feet. It costs a county or municipal government about \$250 to replace a pothole using traditional methods, says Tejpar, for a job that takes at least twice as long and usually requires twice as much manpower.

Tejpar discovered the pothole repair system in England, his native country, on a business trip last year. Tejpar bought the technology and imported it to Bradenton, where he and a team of researchers spent the past six months refining it.

"[This] is a project we've dedicated ourselves to for a long time because we believe in its many benefits," says Tejpar. "It's a safer, cleaner and quieter process than current pothole repair methods."

Tejpar has already begun deploying the system. Clients include a mall in Bradenton and about 45 Starbucks stores in the Jacksonville area, for which Tejpar sent out two-man crews to fix potholes in the store's parking lots.

Company executives are also targeting Wal-Marts in Florida, thinking that well-traveled lots are in greater need of this kind of service.

But Tejpar believes the future of the business lies in a franchise model. He is planning to lease a full B Pothole Free operation for \$35,000, as well as charge a royalty fee on revenues. The operation includes the asphalt heater and related equipment, which is packaged into a hitch-ready cart that includes company signage. Tejpar's crew from Environmental Biotech will train the franchisees.

B Pothole Free is also partnering with Sarasota-based Insignia Bank on equipment leasing, as Tejpar says he realizes a lack of financing is a steep hurdle for entrepreneurs to get into a new business these days.

Tejpar projects that an ambitious, fully trained B Pothole Free operator, working with commercial landlords, can be filling 30 potholes a day. That can translate to \$3,000 a day in sales.

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