

BEING SALT SMART

Using winter salt to provide safe roads, parking lots, and sidewalks during ice or snow storms is common in Maryland, with the vast majority used on roads. However, many times too much winter salt is used during winter storms. Many people think salt is there to melt snow or ice and tend to follow the more is better philosophy, but that's not what salt's primary job is. Oversalting doesn't really help, which means it's literally throwing money down the drain!



Salt's job is to act as a barrier between ice or snow and the surface it lands on to make shoveling or plowing easier, so it's best to use before a storm or just after you've finished shoveling. Salt has virtually no effect after the snow has started to accumulate.

The overuse of salt in Maryland affects our drinking water and is accumulating in groundwater, can be harmful to pets, hurts our streams, and leads to corrosion of infrastructure like pipes, roads, sidewalks, bridges, etc.

Once it's applied salt is very difficult to remove from the environment, so the best way to keep it out of our streams and drinking water is to not use it. Unfortunately, we know that we can't just flip a switch and turn off all salt applications in the State so the best solution is to learn how salt smarter.

As homeowners, we can play a role in reducing salt use in our neighborhoods and keeping our State's waters healthy while protecting people from slips and falls on our properties. Here are several options to manage snow and ice in your community without having to use salt:

- Shovel early, Shovel well, and Shovel again. Manually removing snow and ice is always the most environmentally friendly way, but may not work for folks with health issues that prevent them from doing this
- Cover small critical areas like steps with a tarp before a storm
- Talk to you Homeowner's Association about the issue. Hiring trained professionals can help keep local sidewalks and roads safe with less salt. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is developing a training and certification program for winter maintenance professionals.

If you do need to use salt, then there several smart salting tips that you can follow to make sure you use the right amount for the right reason:

- A little goes a long way. A 12 oz. mug of salt is enough for 10 sidewalk squares



Recommend salt crystal density

- Avoid clumping and spread evenly. Salt granules should be at least 1-2 inches apart
- Salt before a storm, or after you've cleared snow and ice
- Use kitty litter or sand for traction on ice
- Sweep and reuse salt if a storm doesn't happen (it can be reused later as long as you keep it somewhere dry)

Remember winter salts primary job is to make shoveling and plowing easier, not to melt existing snow or ice. Work with us to reduce the amount of winter salt applied in our communities during winter storms while keeping you and others safe.

To learn more about salt and its impacts visit the Maryland Department of the Environment's Winter Salt Page.

(<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/319NonPointSource/Pages/411-on-Salt.aspx>)

ATTACK THE SNOW LIKE A PRO!

SHOVEL EARLY, SHOVEL WELL
Removing snow before ice has the chance to form is the best way to stay on top of winter maintenance.

A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY
In order for salt to be effective as a deicer, it's important to measure out the right amount (no more, no less) for the surface you need to cover.

SPREAD EVENLY
Avoid clumps of salt. Use a handheld spreader or shaker in order to achieve an even spread where the salt granules are at least 1-2 inches away from each other.

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