LOW SALT. NO SALT. MINNESOTA

CLEARING A PATH TO SAFETY, SAVINGS & SUSTAINABILITY

Frequently Asked Questions

The chloride in winter salt products permanently harms the health of our waters.

You can reduce your salt use while still maintaining safe paths and driveways. Check out these frequently asked questions about deicers.

What are deicers?

A deicer is a product that melts snow and ice. Common names for deicers include salt, road salt, and chlorides. Chloride is the powerful chemical found in deicers that is responsible for melting but it also causes damage to water, infrastructure, and vegetation.

Why should I reduce the use of deicers?

All deicers impact the environment. Salt is permanently accumulating in Minnesota's water – in both groundwater and surfaces waters like lakes and streams. There is no practical way to remove salt from water. Just one teaspoon of salt permanently pollutes five gallons of water making it toxic to aquatic life and potentially impacting human health. Salt hurts pets and wildlife, changes soil structure, and damages infrastructure and vegetation.

Salt has contaminated groundwater in some areas of the state, and 75% of Minnesotans rely on groundwater for drinking water. Excess salt can affect the taste and healthfulness of drinking water. Twenty-seven percent of shallow groundwater monitoring wells in the Twin Cities Metro have chloride concentrations that exceed EPA drinking water guidelines. Thirty percent of Twin Cities wells have chloride concentrations that exceed the water quality standard.

Do I have to stop using deicers on my property?

The Low Salt No Salt approach supports you in making property management decisions that will reduce the need for salt on your property while still maintaining safety. There are many practices already in use here in Minnesota that you can adapt for before, during, and after the winter season. You can reduce the need for deicing salts on your property at your own pace and comfort level.

Contact your local watershed organization or city to learn more about the *Low Salt, No Salt Minnesota* program.

Is salt from winter maintenance the major cause of salt pollution in our Minnesota lakes and creeks?

Yes. In fact, a study by the University of Minnesota found that about 78% of salt applied in the Twin Cities for winter maintenance is either transported to groundwater or remains in the local lakes and wetlands. However, salt can also come from water softening, wastewater plant discharge, fertilizer, manure, and dust suppressants.

Why doesn't more salt provide more melting of snow and ice and more safety?

There is a point where additional salt does not yield better results. Winter maintenance crews certified in MPCA's Smart Salting techniques can discern whether more salt means more safety or when it is simply wasteful. They are also trained to use other winter maintenance best practices that reduce the need for salt.

More salt DOES NOT INCREASE melting.

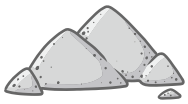
How can winter crews get certified in Smart Salting techniques? Can property managers or others attend trainings as well?

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) hosts Level I and Level II Smart Salting certification courses for winter maintenance professionals and a separate course geared towards property managers.

Visit www.pca.state.mn.us/water/chloride-salts to learn more about training opportunities and/or contact your local city or watershed to find out about trainings in your area.

The MPCA also keeps a list of certified professionals so you can hire the crew that's right for you! Find the list here: www.pca.state.mn.us/water/hire-certified-applicator.

What can I use instead of salt?



All economically practical and effective deicers contain chloride. To remove ice without the use of a deicer, consider using a tool to remove the ice mechanically. Better yet, reduce the build up of ice on your property by shoveling and plowing to remove snow before ice forms. And remember to keep the snow piled where it won't melt and refreeze again on a sidewalk or driveway.

If you do use salt, sweep up excess salt once the ice is melted and salt is lying on bare pavement. Dispose of the salt in the garbage or save it to use with the next storm.

If you only need traction, and do not need to remove snow or ice, you can use sand, grit, or kitty litter. Remember to sweep up these products after the ice melts to avoid polluting our lakes and streams with these substances.

How do I avoid slip and fall lawsuits and what is "due care"?

Training and documentation of winter maintenance activities build a presumption of due care and makes it challenging for an injured party to prove negligence.

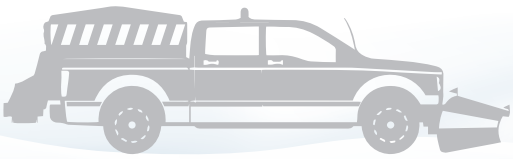
"Due care" is the conduct that a reasonable person will exercise in a particular situation, in looking out for the safety of others. Winter maintenance best practices are well-established and do not compromise safety. People can reduce their own vulnerability to slip-and-fall accidents by practicing due care such as wearing appropriate footwear, allowing extra travel time, and other reasonable efforts given the circumstances.

Property managers/owners can practice due care by implementing a written plan/policy, hiring trained professionals, and documenting weather conditions and operations.

Specific recommendations include:

- Developing a **winter maintenance policy** for your property.*
- Having a **contract with your winter maintenance professional** that includes clear maintenance expectations and requires proper documentation of conditions and activities.*
- Developing a **winter maintenance plan** specific to your property.*
- Hiring a certified applicator and requesting that your property manager take a Smart Salting course.

*Examples, model language, and templates for winter maintenance policies, contracts, and plans can be found here: www.pca.state.mn.us/water/statewide-chloride-resources.



Buyer beware: Environmentally and pet-friendly deicers

Label claims on deicing products are not regulated, so statements such as "eco-friendly" or "paw-safe" may be greenwashing just to sell a product.

Also, products with proprietary blends may not list all ingredients on the label. With all deicers, the best practice is to use the minimum amount.