

Ways to cut back on salt for healthier lakes and rivers

Just like hats and gloves, snow and ice are part of Minnesota winters. While fun for skiing and skating, snow and ice also make our sidewalks and driveways slippery. How we control snow and ice on driveways, sidewalks, parking lots and roads affects water quality in our rivers and lakes. Salt pollutes our water, and it doesn't take much—as little as one teaspoon contaminates five gallons of water! When salt dissolves it becomes invisible, but it does not disappear. Instead, when snow and ice melt, the water flows into stormdrains, washing everything directly into the Mississippi River. Before you grab a bag of salt this winter, consider the following:

- *Always* shovel or plow first. Removing snow buildup allows you to use less salt, and it is more effective.
- Labels can be misleading. **All** salt (and other deicing) products have environmental impacts.
- Do not mix sand and salt; they do different things and actually work against each other. Salt melts ice, and sand provides temporary traction on slippery surfaces. Unless it is swept up later, sand can also pollute our rivers and lakes.
- Rock salt (NaCl) only works when the pavement temperature is above 15 F. Calcium and magnesium chloride work better at lower temperatures.

If you hire out snow removal on your property, choose a contractor who is certified by the state in Snow and Ice Control Best Practices or encourage them to become certified. A link to a list of certified contractors may be found at www.mwmo.org/certifiedcontractors.html.

If you want more information on this topic or wish to host a workshop for homeowners on snow and ice removal, contact the MWMO at 612-465-8780 for details.

-This article was brought to you by the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization