

Low Salt Diet For Driveways & Roads



Credit: Beige Alert <http://creativecommons.org/>

Adapted from "Snow, Road Salt and the Chesapeake Bay" by Tom Schueler, Center for Watershed Protection

For safety reasons, we need to keep driveways and sidewalks clear of ice and snow.

However, choosing the right product and using it correctly is important to help protect our water resources.

Shovel early, shovel often.

Remove as much snow as you can during the storm if possible. Deicers work best when there is only a thin layer of snow or ice that must be melted.

Check the label.

Check the package closely to see what you're buying—often a product may contain several of the ingredients listed below, but the first one listed is usually the main ingredient. Choose calcium chloride over sodium chloride when you can.

Apply salt early, but sparingly.

No matter which chloride product you choose, a little goes a long way. Additional salt won't speed up the melting process. The recommended application rate for sodium chloride is about a handful per square yard. Calcium chloride works at much colder temperatures and you need a lot less (about a handful per 3 square yards).

Stick to sand or Bird Seed.

Kitty litter and ashes may provide some traction, but sand is cheaper and easier to clean up. Bird seed is an even better alternative, especially for residential property owners (though be aware this may attract rodents).

Avoid products that contain urea.

Urea is a form of nitrogen, a fertilizer, when it washes off your driveway it will eventually end up in your local waters.

Avoid salt sensitive plants.

Keep de-icing compounds away from such common plants as green ash, hickory, red maple, sugar maple, white pine, Norway spruce, dogwood, redbud, rose, spirea and hawthorns. Kentucky blue grass and red fescue don't like salt either. You may want to use Calcium Magnesium Acetate CMA as a safer alternative.

ON THE LABEL	WORKS DOWN TO:	COST	ENVIRONMENT CONCERNS
Calcium chloride	-25°F	3x more than rock salt	Use 3x less than rock salt. No cyanide chloride impact.
Magnesium chloride	5°F	N/A	Less toxic, safer for environment than calcium chloride
NaCl: Sodium chloride "rock salt"	15°F	\$5 (50 lb)	May contain cyanide compounds.
Urea	20-25°F	5x more than rock salt	Needless nutrients. Less corrosion.
Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA)	22-25°F	20x more than rock salt	Less toxic.
Sand	No melting effect	\$3 (50lb)	Accumulates in streets & streams.