

A Low Salt Diet for Roads and Sidewalks to Protect Water Quality

Do you and your children enjoy winter activities, such as skiing, snowboarding, ice skating or sledding? Unfortunately, the winter weather doesn't just bring fun activities but heaps of snow to shovel and layers of ice to be removed from our sidewalks, driveways, and roads. Did you know that the deicers we use to remove unwanted snow not only corrode our automobiles, but also negatively affect our water and vegetation?

The most commonly used material to melt snow and ice is unrefined rock salt – the same chemical compound used as table salt and water softener ingredient. As the salt melts the ice, the water solution runs into nearby storm drains or ditches. As a result, the salt can seep into groundwater or enter local lakes and streams. This excess salt poses a great threat to fresh water ecosystems and fish, as well as, intensifies hypertension in humans and diminishes the amounts of clean drinking water available. Additionally, salty water splashed on plants can result in damage or death by burning their roots.



Storm drains carry road runoff directly to our rivers.

What can we do to prevent salt damage?

☔ It is very important to physically remove as much ice as possible with a shovel before applying salt.

☔ You can also opt to use salt alternatives such as calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) or sand; however, you must remember that each of these materials, though more environmentally friendly, pose possible harmful affects to the environment as well.

☔ ***Therefore, the best strategy is to minimize the use of any chemical and when you do choose to use a deicer, apply the least amount necessary to get the job done.***

Sources:

www.crowc.org

www.smartgardening.ca/salt.asp

www.usroads.com

For more information on watersheds in southwest Michigan visit

www.swmpc.org/water.asp.