



NEW JERSEY  
AMERICAN WATER

WE KEEP LIFE FLOWING™



## LESS SALT, PLEASE

Use salt wisely in winter months to improve safety and reduce environmental impacts.



### Road Salt and Drinking Water

When winter strikes, roads are commonly treated with salt to keep them free of ice for safety. Road salt lowers the freezing point of water, melting existing ice and preventing falling snow or rain from freezing. An estimated 20 million tons of salt is spread on U.S. roads each year.

Road salt use provides an important safety benefit but can negatively impact the environment. Excess salt can be carried to streams and storm drains or soak directly into the ground, and it can be harmful to aquatic life and drinking water supplies. Studies have shown increasing concentrations of chlorides in streams across the U.S. related to use of road salt. Higher salt concentrations in sources of drinking water are more difficult and expensive to treat.

Salt is an effective method for de-icing roads, parking lots, driveways and sidewalks that will continue to be used for years to come. But, there are tips residents and businesses can use on how to apply salt in a way that reduces environmental and drinking water impacts.

### HELPFUL TIPS TO REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL AND DRINKING WATER IMPACTS

Only use as much salt as needed to treat a given area. A 12-oz coffee mug is about a pound of salt and enough to treat a 20-foot driveway.

- Spread salt over the area leaving about three inches of space between the granules.
- Sweep up any extra salt left over on dry pavement so that it does not wash away.
- Shovel snow from driveways and sidewalks before it turns to ice. This reduces the need for de-icing.
- Consider using a different kind of salt. Calcium magnesium acetate and magnesium chloride are generally better alternatives to sodium chloride.
- For businesses that contract snow clearing services, discuss agreements to pay by the area cleared instead of amount of salt used.

### HOW ROAD SALT CAN IMPACT DRINKING WATER

Excessive use of salt and brine by transportation officials during winter weather increases the sodium chloride content in the source water used to generate drinking water and can impart a salty taste. These impacts are typically short lived and diminish once road salt applications and associated runoff from snow melt have ceased.

The water continues to meet all health-based primary drinking water standards and the higher concentrations of sodium and chloride that we experience during snow events do not pose a health concern for most individuals in comparison to other sources of sodium in an average person's diet. However, customers with health concerns, and those on a sodium-restricted diet, may want to contact their healthcare provider if they have questions.



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