

Working to Keep Roads Safe while Protecting our Waters this Winter

Whether you're a fan of the snow or secretly hoping the mild fall will continue right into spring, winter is coming and City of Stoughton crews are ready. Our goal is to keep roads, parking lots and sidewalks safe this winter by using the right amount of salt. More isn't always better, especially when it comes to winter salt use. Excess salt can harm plants and animals, pollute our water, damage buildings and corrode vehicles, roads and bridges. Did you know that 1 teaspoon of salt can pollute 5 gallons of water? Once you put salt down, it doesn't go away. Instead, it travels into our lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands, putting our aquatic life at risk and endangering our freshwater resources. The good news is that a little salt can go a long ways if applied properly.

The City of Stoughton is using sensible salting practices such as calibrating our plow trucks to put down the proper amount of salt and pre-wetting salt as it's applied during the storm. Before the snow season, each truck is calibrated to only put down a specific amount of salt as it goes down the road. The truth is, we don't need to use that much salt to be effective. Our plow trucks put down roughly 300-400 lbs of salt per lane mile depending on the conditions. Furthermore, each plow truck is equipped with a spray bar that pre-wets the salt before it hits the road. The practice of pre-wetting activates the salt resulting in faster melting. It also helps the salt stick to the pavement making it less likely to bounce off the road before it can work.

These practices allow us to keep roads, parking lots and sidewalks safe while reducing salt use and our impact to our ponds, wetlands and the Yahara River. Please join us in our effort to become Salt Wise by taking some simple actions this winter:

- **Shovel:** Clear walkways and other areas before the snow turns to ice. The more snow you remove manually, the less salt you will have to use and the more effective it will be.
- **Scatter:** Believe it or not, just a coffee mug of salt is enough to treat an entire 20-foot driveway or 10 sidewalk squares.
- **Switch:** When pavement temps drop below 15, salt won't work. Switch to sand for traction or a [different ice melter](#) that works in lower temperatures.
- **Hire a salt wise applicator:** If you hire a contractor to remove snow and ice, let them know you are WI Salt Wise! Some local applicators have been trained in winter maintenance practices that reduce environmental impact. Ask if they've been trained and what practices they use.
- **Look** for proper salt use at the stores & businesses you visit. If they're using the right amount of salt, tell them thank you! If not, let them know about WI Salt Wise.
- **Be Salt Wise All Year:** The salt you put in your water softener ends up in local fresh-water streams. New, efficient softeners use less than one bag per month. If you're using more, have a professional tune up your softener or invest in a new, high-efficiency model.