

DON'T STAY SALTY

Winter in New England brings beautiful snow-covered scenery, but it also brings icy roads, sidewalks, and driveways – resulting in increased salt usage. Like many other native New Englanders, I grew up associating road salt with safety. It wasn't until recently, while volunteering with a watershed protection presentation, that I realized salt is a pollutant.

Salt is the most common de-icing material, and while effective on melting ice and preventing accidents, the excessive use harms the environment—specifically watersheds. When applied to roads, sidewalks, and driveways, salt doesn't disappear once the ice melts. Instead it infiltrates nearby watersheds and soil which can impact drinking water supply. In addition to impacting water supply, excessive salt use can also be harmful to aquatic life and disrupt the ecosystem.

The good news is that there are ways in which we can reduce salt pollution. Here are some ways we can salt smarter:

Shoveling First: Removing as much snow as possible reduces the amount of salt needed

Limiting Salt Use: More salt does not mean more effective melting. A coffee mug worth of salt is often the perfect amount to help melt the ice on a standard size driveway (18x20 ft).

Using Alternatives: Seeking out eco-friendlier options such as sand, beet juice mixtures, and calcium magnesium are great ways to reduce salt pollution.

Sweeping Up Excess: Once the ice has melted, sweeping up unused salt prevents it from entering storm drains and other water reservoirs.

While winter salt is essential to withstand New England winters, it's important to know the risks that come with over salting. Winter salt week is important to reflect on ways we can help sustain the environment, not only the winter months but throughout the rest of the year as well. Together we can make a difference and protect the world around us for the generations to come.

